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The Yellow Book

An Illustrated Quarterly

Volume VI July 1895



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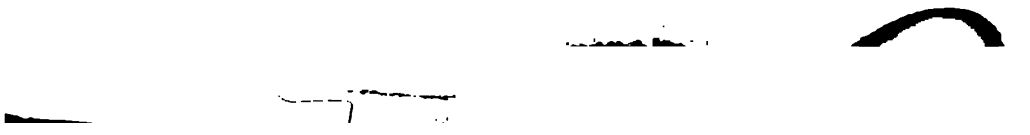
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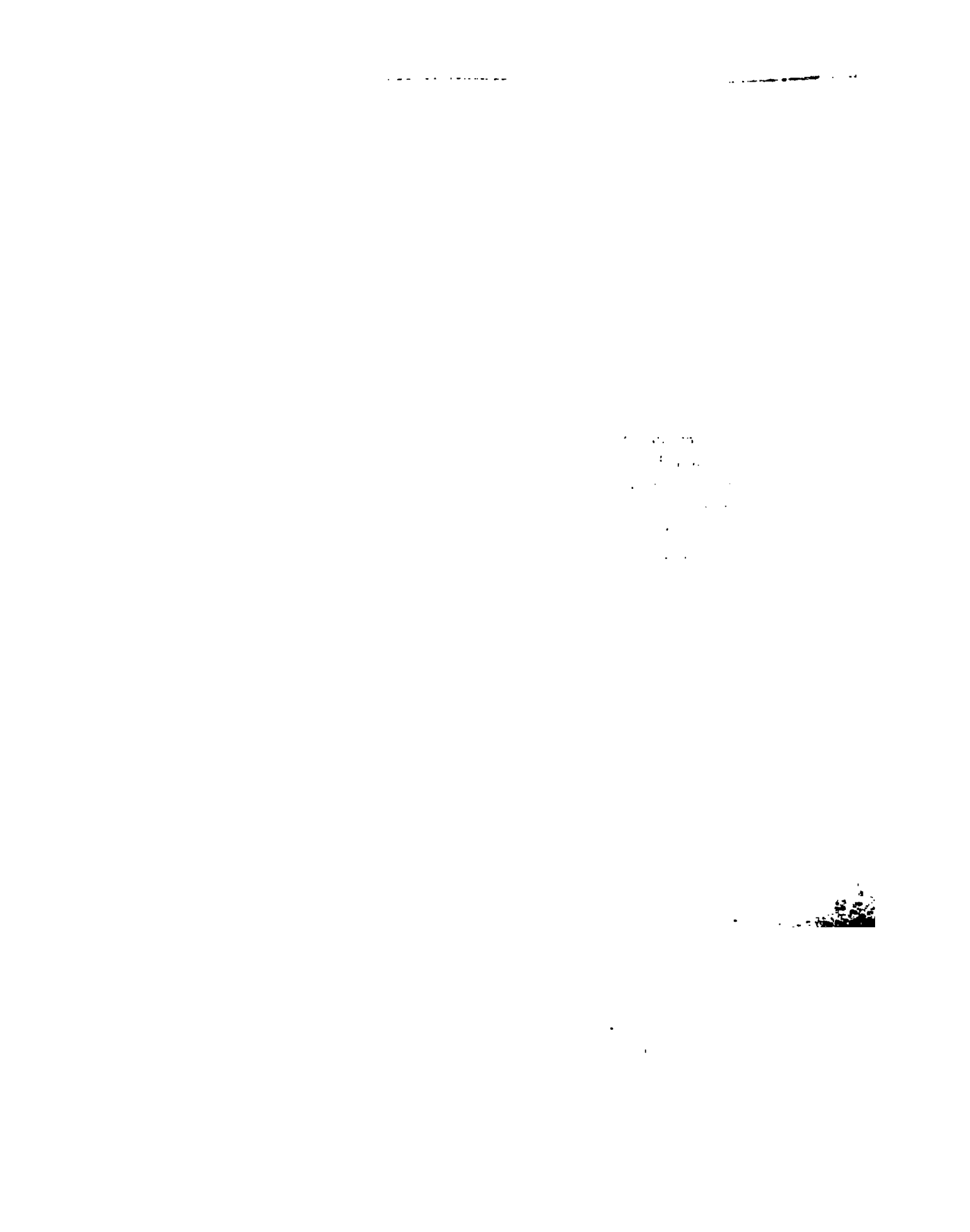
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The Yellow Book

Volume VI July, 1895



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An Illustrated Quarterly

Volume VI July, 1895



London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, Vigo Street
Boston: Copeland & Day

[redacted]





The Next Time

By Henry James

MRS. HIGHMORE'S errand this morning was odd enough to deserve commemoration : she came to ask me to write a notice of her great forthcoming work. Her great works have come forth so frequently without my assistance that I was sufficiently entitled, on this occasion, to open my eyes ; but what really made me stare was the ground on which her request reposed, and what leads me to record the incident is the train of memory lighted by that explanation. Poor Ray Limbert, while we talked, seemed to sit there between us : she reminded me that my acquaintance with him had begun, eighteen years ago, with her having come in precisely as she came in this morning to bespeak my consideration for him. If she didn't know then how little my consideration was worth she is at least enlightened about its value to-day, and it is just in that knowledge that the drollery of her visit resides. As I hold up the torch to the dusky years—by which I mean as I cipher up with a pen that stumbles and stops the figured column of my reminiscences—I see that Limbert's public hour, or at least my small apprehension of it, is rounded by those two occasions. It was *finis*, with a little moralising flourish, that Mrs. Highmore seemed to trace to-day at the bottom of the page. "One of the most voluminous writers of the time," she has often repeated

repeated this sign ; but never, I dare say, in spite of her professional command of appropriate emotion, with an equal sense of that mystery and that sadness of things which, to people of imagination, generally hover over the close of human histories. This romance at any rate is bracketed by her early and her late appeal ; and when its melancholy protrusions had caught the declining light again from my half-hour's talk with her, I took a private vow to recover, while that light still lingers, something of the delicate flush, to pick out, with a brief patience, the perplexing lesson.

It was wonderful to observe how, for herself, Mrs. Highmore had already done so : she wouldn't have hesitated to announce to me what was the matter with Ralph Limbert, or at all events to give me a glimpse of the high admonition she had read in his career. There could have been no better proof of the vividness of this parable, which we were really in our pleasant sympathy quite at one about, than that Mrs. Highmore, of all hardened sinners, should have been converted. This indeed was not news to me : she impressed upon me that for the last ten years she had wanted to do something artistic, something as to which she was prepared not to care a rap whether or no it should sell. She brought home to me further that it had been mainly seeing what her brother-in-law did, and how he did it, that had wedded her to this perversity. As *he* didn't sell, dear soul, and as several persons, of whom I was one, thought ever so much of him for it, the fancy had taken her—taken her even quite early in her prolific course—of reaching, if only once, the same heroic eminence. She yearned to be, like Limbert, but of course only once, an exquisite failure. There was something a failure was, a failure in the market, that a success somehow wasn't. A success was as prosaic as a good dinner : there was nothing more to be said about it than that you had had it. Who but vulgar people, in such a case, made gloating remarks about

about the courses? It was by such vulgar people, often, that a success was attested. It made, if you came to look at it, nothing but money; that is it made so much that any other result showed small in comparison. A failure, now, could make—oh, with the aid of immense talent of course, for there were failures and failures —such a reputation! She did me the honour—she had often done it—to intimate that what she meant by reputation was seeing *me* toss a flower. If it took a failure to catch a failure I was by my own admission well qualified to place the laurel. It was because she had made so much money and Mr. Highmore had taken such care of it that she could treat herself to an hour of pure glory. She perfectly remembered that as often as I had heard her heave that sigh I had been prompt with my declaration that a book sold might easily be as glorious as a book unsold. Of course she knew that, but she knew also that it was an age of flourishing rubbish and that she had never heard me speak of anything that had "done well" exactly as she had sometimes heard me speak of something that hadn't—with just two or three words of respect which, when I used them, seemed to convey more than they commonly stood for, seemed to hush up the discussion a little, as if for the very beauty of the secret.

I may declare in regard to these allusions that, whatever I then thought of myself as a holder of the scales, I had never scrupled to laugh out at the humour of Mrs. Highmore's pursuit of quality at any price. It had never rescued her, even for a day, from the hard doom of popularity, and, though I never gave her my word for it, there was no reason at all why it should. The public *would* have her, as her husband used roguishly to remark; not indeed that, making her bargains, standing up to her publishers and even, in his higher flights, to her reviewers, he ever had a glimpse of her attempted conspiracy against her genius, or rather, as I may say,

against

tained for her sister. Pretty pink Maud had cast me out, but I appear to have passed in the flurried little circle for a magnanimous youth. Pretty pink Maud, so lovely then, before her troubles, that dusky Jane was gratefully conscious of all she made up for, Maud Stannace, very literary too, very languishing and extremely bullied by her mother, had yielded, invidiously, as it might have struck me, to Ray Limbert's suit, which Mrs. Stannace was not the woman to stomach. Mrs. Stannace was never the woman to do anything: she had been shocked at the way her children, with the grubby taint of their father's blood (he had published pale Remains or flat Conversations of *his* father) breathed the alien air of authorship. If not the daughter, nor even the niece, she was, if I am not mistaken, the second cousin of a hundred earls, and a great stickler for relationship, so that she had other views for her brilliant child, especially after her quiet one (such had been her original discreet forecast of the producer of eighty volumes) became the second wife of an ex-army-surgeon, already the father of four children. Mrs. Stannace had too manifestly dreamed it would be given to pretty pink Maud to detach some one of the hundred (he wouldn't be missed) from the cluster. It was because she cared only for cousins that I unlearnt the way to her house, which she had once reminded me was one of the few paths of gentility indulgently open to me. Ralph Limbert, who belonged to nobody and had done nothing—nothing even at Cambridge—had only the uncanny spell he had cast upon her younger daughter to recommend him; but if her younger daughter had a spark of filial feeling she wouldn't commit the indecency of deserting for his sake a deeply dependent and intensely aggravated mother.

These things I learned from Jane Highmore, who, as if her books had been babies (they remained her only ones) had waited till after marriage to show what she could do, and now bade fair to surround

surround her satisfied spouse (he took, for some mysterious reason, a part of the credit) with a little family, in sets of triplets, which, properly handled, would be the support of his declining years. The young couple, neither of whom had a penny, were now virtually engaged: the thing was subject to Ralph's putting his hand on some regular employment. People more enamoured couldn't be conceived, and Mrs. Highmore, honest woman, who had moreover a professional sense for a love-story, was eager to take them under her wing. What was wanted was a decent opening for Limbert, which it had occurred to her I might assist her to find, though indeed I had not yet found any such matter for myself. But it was well known that I was too particular, whereas poor Ralph, with the easy manners of genius, was ready to accept almost anything to which a salary, even a small one, was attached. If he could only get a place on a newspaper, for instance, the rest of his maintenance would come freely enough. It was true that his two novels, one of which she had brought to leave with me, had passed unperceived, and that to her, Mrs. Highmore personally, they didn't irresistibly appeal; but she could none the less assure me that I should have only to spend ten minutes with him (and our encounter must speedily take place) to receive an impression of latent power.

Our encounter took place soon after I had read the volumes Mrs. Highmore had left with me, in which I recognised an intention of a sort that I had now pretty well given up the hope of meeting. I daresay that, without knowing it, I had been looking out rather hungrily for an altar of sacrifice: at any rate, when I came across Ralph Limbert I submitted to one of the rarest emotions of my literary life, the sense of an activity in which I could critically rest. The rest was deep and salutary, and it has not been disturbed to this hour. It has been a long, large surrender,

the irony of dropped discriminations. He couldn't trouble me, whatever he did, for I practically enjoyed him as much when he was worst as when he was better. It was a case, I suppose, of natural prearrangement in which I hasten to add, I keep excellent company. We are a numerous band, partakers of the same repose, who sit together in the shade of the tree, by the plash of the fountain, with the glare of the desert around us and no great vice that I know of but the habit perhaps of estimating people a little too much by what they think of a certain style. If it had been laid upon these few pages, however, to be the history of an enthusiasm, I should not have undertaken them: they are concerned with Ralph Limbert in relations to which I was a stranger, or in which I participated only by sympathy. I used to talk about his work, but I seldom talk now: the brotherhood of the faith have become, like the Trappists, a silent order. If to the day of his death, after mortal disenchantments, the impression he first produced always evoked the word "ingenuous," those to whom his face was familiar can easily imagine what it must have been when it still had the light of youth. I have never seen a man of genius look so passive, a man of experience so off his guard. At the period I made his acquaintance this freshness was all unbrushed. His foot had begun to stumble, but he was full of big intentions and of sweet Maud Stannace. Black-haired and pale, deceptively languid, he had the eyes of a clever child and the voice of a bronze bell. He saw more even than I had done in the girl he was engaged to; as time went on I became conscious that we had both, properly enough, seen rather more than there was. Our odd situation, that of the three of us, became perfectly possible from the moment I observed that he had more patience with her than I should have had. I was happy at not having to supply this quantity, and she, on her side, found pleasure in being able to

to be impertinent to me without incurring the reproach of a bad wife.

Limbert's novels appeared to have brought him no money; they had only brought him, so far as I could then make out, tributes that took up his time. These indeed brought him, from several quarters, some other things, and on my part, at the end of three months, *The Blackport Beacon*. I don't to-day remember how I obtained for him the London correspondence of the great northern organ, unless it was through somebody's having obtained it for myself. I seem to recall that I got rid of it in Limbert's interest, persuaded the editor that he was much the better man. The better man was naturally the man who had pledged himself to support a charming wife. We were neither of us good, as the event proved, but he had a rarer kind of badness. *The Blackport Beacon* had two London correspondents—one a supposed haunter of political circles, the other a votary of questions sketchily classified as literary. They were both expected to be lively, and what was held out to each was that it was honourably open to him to be livelier than the other. I recollect the political correspondent of that period, and that what it was reducible to was that Ray Limbert was to try to be livelier than Pat Moyle. He had not yet seemed to me so candid as when he undertook this exploit, which brought matters to a head with Mrs. Stannace, inasmuch as her opposition to the marriage now logically fell to the ground. It's all tears and laughter as I look back upon that admirable time, in which nothing was so romantic as our intense vision of the real. No fool's paradise ever rustled such a cradle-song. It was anything but Bohemia —it was the very temple of Mrs. Grundy. We knew we were too critical, and that made us sublimely indulgent; we believed we did our duty, or wanted to, and that made us free to dream. But we dreamed over the multiplication-table; we were nothing

nothing if not practical. Oh, the long smokes and sudden ideas, the knowing hints and banished scruples! The great thing was for Limbert to bring out his next book, which was just what his delightful engagement with the *Beacon* would give him leisure and liberty to do. The kind of work, all human and elastic and suggestive, was capital experience: in picking up things for his bi-weekly letter he would pick up life as well, he would pick up literature. The new publications, the new pictures, the new people—there would be nothing too novel for us and nobody too sacred. We introduced everything and everybody into Mrs. Stannace's drawing-room, of which I again became a familiar.

Mrs. Stannace, it was true, thought herself in strange company; she didn't particularly mind the new books, though some of them seemed queer enough, but to the new people she had decided objections. It was notorious, however, that poor Lady Robeck secretly wrote for one of the papers, and the thing had certainly, in its glance at the doings of the great world, a side that might be made attractive. But we were going to make every side attractive, and we had everything to say about the kind of thing a paper like the *Beacon* would want. To give it what it would want and to give it nothing else was not doubtless an inspiring, but it was a perfectly respectable task, especially for a man with an appealing bride and a contentious mother-in-law. I thought Limbert's first letters as charming as the *genre* allowed, though I won't deny that in spite of my sense of the importance of concessions I was just a trifle disconcerted at the way he had caught the tone. The tone was of course to be caught, but need it have been caught so in the act? The creature was even cleverer, as Maud Stannace said, than she had ventured to hope. Verily it was a good thing to have a dose of the wisdom of the serpent. If it had to be journalism—well, it *was* journalism If he had to be "chatty"—

well

well, he *was* chatty. Now and then he made a hit that—it was stupid of me—brought the blood to my face. I hated him to be so personal; but still, if it would make his fortune——! It wouldn't of course directly, but the book would, practically and in the sense to which our pure ideas of fortune were confined; and these things were all for the book. The daily balm meanwhile was in what one knew of the book—there were exquisite things to know; in the quiet monthly cheques from Blackport and in the deeper rose of Maud's little preparations, which were as dainty, on their tiny scale, as if she had been a humming-bird building a nest. When at the end of three months her betrothed had fairly settled down to his correspondence—in which Mrs. Highmore was the only person, so far as we could discover, disappointed, even she moreover being in this particular tortuous and possibly jealous; when the situation had assumed such a comfortable shape it was quite time to prepare. I published at that moment my first volume, mere faded ink to-day, a little collection of literary impressions, odds and ends of criticism contributed to a journal less remunerative but also less chatty than the *Beacon*, small ironies and ecstasies, great phrases and mistakes; and the very week it came out poor Limbert devoted half of one of his letters to it, with the happy sense, this time, of gratifying both himself and me as well as the Blackport breakfast tables. I remember his saying it wasn't literature, the stuff, superficial stuff, he had to write about me; but what did that matter if it came back, as we knew, to the making for literature in the roundabout way? I sold the thing, I remember, for ten pounds, and with the money I bought in Vigo Street a quaint piece of old silver for Maud Stannace, which I carried to her with my own hand as a wedding-gift. In her mother's small drawing-room, a faded bower of photography, fenced in and bedimmed by folding screens out of which sallow

slow persons of fashion, with dashing signatures, looked at you from retouched eyes and little windows of plush, I was left to wait long enough to feel in the air of the house a hushed vibration of disaster. When our young lady came in she was very pale, and her eyes too had been retouched.

"Something horrid has happened," I immediately said; and having really, all along, but half believed in her mother's meagre permission, I risked with an unguarded groan the introduction of Mrs. Stannace's name.

"Yes, she has made a dreadful scene; she insists on our putting it off again. We're very unhappy: poor Ray has been turned off." Her tears began to flow again.

I had such a good conscience that I stared. "Turned off what?"

"Why, his paper of course. The *Beacon* has given him what he calls the sack. They don't like his letters—they're not the sort of thing they want."

My blankness could only deepen. "Then what sort of thing *do* they want?"

"Something more chatty."

"More?" I cried, aghast.

"More gossipy, more personal. They want 'journalism.' They want tremendous trash."

"Why, that's just what his letters have *been!*" I broke out.

This was strong, and I caught myself up, but the girl offered me the pardon of a beautiful wan smile. "So Ray himself declares. He says he has stooped so low."

"Very well—he must stoop lower. He *must* keep the place."

"He can't!" poor Maud wailed. "He says he has tried all he knows, has been abject, has gone on all fours, and that if they don't like that——"

"He

"He accepts his dismissal?" I demanded in dismay.

She gave a tragic shrug. "What other course is open to him? He wrote to them that such work as he has done is the very worst he can do for the money."

"Then," I inquired, with a flash of hope, "they'll offer him more for worse?"

"No, indeed," she answered, "they haven't even offered him to go on at a reduction. He isn't funny enough."

I reflected a moment. "But surely such a thing as his notice of my book——!"

"It was your wretched book that was the last straw! He should have treated it superficially."

"Well, if he didn't——!" I began. But then I checked myself. "*Je vous porte malheur.*"

She didn't deny this; she only went on: "What on earth is he to do?"

"He's to do better than the monkeys! He's to write!"

"But what on earth are we to marry on?"

I considered once more. "You're to marry on *The Major Key*."

II

The Major Key was the new novel, and the great thing therefore was to finish it; a consummation for which three months of the *Beacon* had in some degree prepared the way. The action of that journal was indeed a shock, but I didn't know then the worst, didn't know that in addition to being a shock it was also a symptom. It was the first hint of the difficulty to which poor Limbert was eventually to succumb. His state was the happier, however, for his not immediately seeing all that it meant. Difficulty

culty was the law of life, but one could thank heaven it was exceptionally present in that horrid quarter. There was the difficulty that inspired, the difficulty of *The Major Key* to wit, which it was, after all, base to sacrifice to the turning of somersaults for pennies. These convictions Ray Limbert beguiled his fresh wait by blandly entertaining: not indeed, I think, that the failure of his attempt to be chatty didn't leave him slightly humiliated. If it was bad enough to have grinned through a horse-collar, it was very bad indeed to have grinned in vain. Well, he would try no more grinning, or at least no more horse-collars. The only success worth one's powder was success in the line of one's idiosyncrasy. Consistency was in itself distinction, and what was talent but the art of being completely whatever it was that one happened to be? One's things were characteristic or they were nothing. I look back rather fondly on our having exchanged in those days these admirable remarks and many others; on our having been very happy too, in spite of postponements and obscurities, in spite also of such occasional hauntings as could spring from our lurid glimpse of the fact that even twaddle cunningly calculated was above some people's heads. It was easy to wave away spectres by the reflection that all one had to do was not to write for those people; and it was certainly not for them that Limbert wrote while he hammered at *The Major Key*. The taint of literature was fatal only in a certain kind of air, which was precisely the kind against which we had now closed our window. Mrs. Stannace rose from her crumpled cushions as soon as she had obtained an adjournment, and Maud looked pale and proud, quite victorious and superior, at her having obtained nothing more. Maud behaved well, I thought, to her mother, and well indeed, for a girl who had mainly been taught to be flowerlike, to every one. What she gave Ray Limbert her fine, abundant needs made him, then and ever, pay for; but the gift

gift was liberal, almost wonderful—an assertion I make even while remembering to how many clever women, early and late, his work had been dear. It was not only that the woman he was to marry was in love with him, but that (this was the strangeness) she had really seen almost better than any one what he could do. The greatest strangeness was that she didn't want him to do something different. This boundless belief was, indeed, the main way of her devotion ; and, as an act of faith, it naturally asked for miracles. She was a rare wife for a poet, if she was not perhaps the best who could have been picked out for a poor man.

Well, we were to have the miracles at all events, and we were in a perfect state of mind to receive them. There were more of us evety day, and we thought highly even of our friend's odd jobs and pot-boilers. The *Beacon* had had no successor, but he found some quiet corners and stray chances. Perpetually poking the fire and looking out of the window, he was certainly not a monster of facility, but he was, thanks perhaps to a certain method in that madness, a monster of certainty. It wasn't every one, however, who knew him for this : many editors printed him but once. He was getting a small reputation as a man it was well to have the first time : he created obscure apprehensions as to what might happen the second. He was good for making an impression, but no one seemed exactly to know what the impression was good for when made. The reason was simply that they had not seen yet *The Major Key*, that fiery-hearted rose as to which we watched in private the formation of petal after petal. Nothing mattered but that, for it had already elicited a splendid bid, much talked about in Mrs. Highmore's drawing-room, where, at this point my reminiscences grow particularly thick. *Her* roses bloomed all the year, and her sociability increased with her row of prizes. We had an idea that we "met every one" there—so we naturally

naturally thought when we met each other. Between our hostess and Ray Limbert flourished the happiest relation, the only cloud on which was that her husband eyed him rather askance. When he was called clever this personage wanted to know what he had to "show"; and it was certain that he had nothing that could compare with Jane Highmore. Mr. Highmore took his stand on accomplished work and, turning up his coat-tails, warmed his rear with a good conscience at the neat bookcase in which the generations of triplets were chronologically arranged. The harmony between his companions rested on the fact that, as I have already hinted, each would have liked so much to be the other. Limbert couldn't but have a feeling about a woman who, in addition to being the best creature and her sister's backer, would have made, could she have condescended, such a success with the *Beacon*. On the other hand, Mrs. Highmore used freely to say: "Do you know, he'll do exactly the thing that *I* want to do? I shall never do it myself, but he'll do it instead. Yes, he'll do *my* thing, and I shall hate him for it—the wretch." Hating him was her pleasant humour, for the wretch was personally to her taste.

She prevailed on her own publisher to promise to take *The Major Key* and to engage to pay a considerable sum down, as the phrase is, on the presumption of its attracting attention. This was good news for the evening's end at Mrs. Highmore's, when there were only four or five left and cigarettes ran low; but there was better news to come, and I have never forgotten how, as it was I who had the good fortune to bring it, I kept it back on one of those occasions, for the sake of my effect, till only the right people remained. The right people were now more and more numerous, but this was a revelation addressed only to a choice residuum—a residuum including of course Limbert himself, with whom I haggled for another cigarette before I announced that as a consequence

a consequence of an interview I had had with him that afternoon, and of a subtle argument I had brought to bear, Mrs. Highmore's pearl of publishers had agreed to put forth the new book as a serial. He was to "run" it in his magazine, and he was to pay ever so much more for the privilege. I produced a fine gasp which presently found a more articulate relief, but poor Limbert's voice failed him once for all (he knew he was to walk away with me) and it was some one else who asked me in what my subtle argument had resided. I forget what florid description I then gave of it: to-day I have no reason not to confess that it had resided in the simple plea that the book was exquisite. I had said: "Come, my dear friend, be original; just risk it for that!" My dear friend seemed to rise to the chance, and I followed up my advantage, permitting him honestly no illusion as to the quality of the work. He clutched interrogatively at two or three attenuations, but I dashed them aside, leaving him face to face with the formidable truth. It was just a pure gem: was he the man not to flinch? His danger appeared to have acted upon him as the anaconda acts upon the rabbit; fascinated and paralysed, he had been engulfed in the long pink throat. When, a week before, at my request, Limbert had let me possess for a day the complete manuscript, beautifully copied out by Maud Stannace, I had flushed with indignation at its having to be said of the author of such pages that he hadn't the common means to marry. I had taken the field, in a great glow, to repair this scandal, and it was therefore quite directly my fault if, three months later, when *The Major Key* began to run, Mrs. Stannace was driven to the wall. She had made a condition of a fixed income; and at last a fixed income was achieved.

She had to recognise it, and after much prostration among the photographs she recognised it to the extent of accepting some of the

the convenience of it in the form of a project for a common household, to the expenses of which each party should proportionately contribute. Jane Highmore made a great point of her not being left alone, but Mrs. Stannace herself determined the proportion, which, on Limbert's side at least, and in spite of many other fluctuations, was never altered. His income had been "fixed" with a vengeance: having painfully stooped to the comprehension of it, Mrs. Stannace rested on this effort to the end and asked no further questions on the subject. *The Major Key*, in other words, ran ever so long, and before it was half out Limbert and Maud had been married and the common household set up. These first months were probably the happiest in the family annals, with wedding-bells and budding laurels, the quiet, assured course of the book and the friendly, familiar note, round the corner, of Mrs. Highmore's big guns. They gave Ralph time to block in another picture, as well as to let me know, after a while, that he had the happy prospect of becoming a father. We had some dispute, at times, as to whether *The Major Key* was making an impression, but our contention could only be futile so long as we were not agreed as to what an impression consisted of. Several persons wrote to the author, and several others asked to be introduced to him: wasn't that an impression? One of the lively "weeklies," snapping at the deadly "monthlies," said the whole thing was "grossly inartistic"—wasn't that? It was somewhere else proclaimed "a wonderfully subtle character-study"—wasn't that too? The strongest effect doubtless was produced on the publisher when, in its lemon-coloured volumes, like a little dish of three custards, the book was at last served cold: he never got his money back and, as far as I know, has never got it back to this day. *The Major Key* was rather a great performance than a great success. It converted

readers into friends and friends into lovers; it placed the , as the phrase is—placed him all too definitely; but it to obscurity in the account of sales eventually rendered. in short an exquisite thing, but it was scarcely a thing ve published, and certainly not a thing to have married on. rd all about the matter, for my intervention had much ex- me. Mrs. Highmore said the second volume had given her , and the ideas are probably to be found in some of her works, e circulation of which they have even perhaps contributed. was not absolutely yet the very thing she wanted to do, but s on the way to it. So much, she informed me, she par- rly perceived in the light of a critical study which I put forth ttle magazine; which the publisher, in his advertisements, l from profusely; and as to which there sprang up some l story that Limbert himself had written it. I remember n my asking some one why such an idiotic thing had been my interlocutor replied: "Oh, because, you know, it's just ay he *would* have written!" My spirit sank a little perhaps eflected that with such analogies in our manner there might to be some in our fate.

was during the next four or five years that our eyes were to what, unless something could be done, that fate, at least Limbert's part, might be. The thing to be done was of se to write the book, the book that would make the differ- , really justify the burden he had accepted and consummately ess his power. For the works that followed upon *The Major* he had inevitably to accept conditions the reverse of brilliant, time when the strain upon his resources had begun to show ness. With three babies, in due course, an ailing wife, and a plication still greater than these, it became highly important a man should do only his best. Whatever Limbert did was his

his best ; so, at least, each time, I thought, and so I unfailingly said somewhere, though it was not my saying it, heaven knows, that made the desired difference. Every one else indeed said it, and there was always the comfort, among multiplied worries, that his position was quite assured. The two books that followed *The Major Key* did more than anything else to assure it, and Jane Highmore was always crying out : "You stand alone, dear Ray ; you stand absolutely alone !" Dear Ray used to tell me that he felt the truth of this in feebly-attempted discussions with his bookseller. His sister-in-law gave him good advice into the bargain ; she was a repository of knowing hints, of esoteric learning. These things were doubtless not the less valuable to him for bearing wholly on the question of how a reputation might be, with a little gumption, as Mrs. Highmore said, "worked" : save when she occasionally bore testimony to her desire to do, as Limbert did, something some day for her own very self, I never heard her speak of the literary motive as if it were distinguishable from the pecuniary. She cocked up his hat, she pricked up his prudence for him, reminding him that as one seemed to take one's self, so the silly world was ready to take one. It was a fatal mistake to be too candid even with those who were all right—not to look and to talk prosperous, not at least to pretend that one had beautiful sales. To listen to her you would have thought the profession of letters a wonderful game of bluff. Wherever one's idea began it ended somehow in inspired paragraphs in the newspapers. "*I* pretend, I assure you, that you are going off like wildfire—I can at least do that for you !" she often declared, prevented as she was from doing much else by Mr. Highmore's insurmountable objection to *their* taking Mrs. Stannace.

I couldn't help regarding the presence of this latter lady in Limbert's life as the major complication : whatever he attempted it

it appeared given to him to achieve as best he could in the narrow margin unswept by her pervasive skirts. I may have been mistaken in supposing that she practically lived on him, for though it was not in him to follow adequately Mrs. Highmore's counsel there were exasperated confessions he never made, scanty domestic curtains he rattled on their rings. I may exaggerate, in the retrospect, his apparent anxieties, for these after all were the years when his talent was freshest and when, as a writer, he most laid down his line. It wasn't of Mrs. Stannace, nor even, as time went on, of Mrs. Limbert that we mainly talked when I got, at longer intervals, a smokier hour in the little grey den from which we could step out, as we used to say, to the lawn. The lawn was the back-garden, and Limbert's study was behind the dining-room, with folding-doors not impervious to the clatter of the children's tea. We sometimes took refuge from it in the depths —a bush and a half deep—of the shrubbery, where was a bench that gave us a view, while we gossiped, of Mrs. Stannace's tiara-like headdress nodding at an upper window. Within doors and without, Limbert's life was overhung by an awful region that figured in his conversation, comprehensively and with unpremeditated art, as Upstairs. It was Upstairs that the thunder gathered, that Mrs. Stannace kept her accounts and her state, that Mrs. Limbert had her babies and her headaches, that the bells forever jangled for the maids, that everything imperative, in short, took place—everything that he had somehow, pen in hand, to meet and dispose of in the little room on the garden-level. I don't think he liked to go Upstairs, but no special burst of confidence was needed to make me feel that a terrible deal of service went. It was the habit of the ladies of the Stannace family to be extremely waited on, and I've never been in a house where three maids and a nursery-governess gave such an impression of a retinue

retinue. "Oh, they're so deucedly, so hereditarily fine!"—I remember how that dropped from him in some worried hour. Well, it was because Maud was so universally fine that we had both been in love with her. It was not an air moreover for the plaintive note: no private inconvenience could long outweigh, for him, the great happiness of these years—the happiness that sat with us when we talked and that made it always amusing to talk, the sense of his being on the heels of success, coming closer and closer, touching it at last, knowing that he should touch it again and hold it fast and hold it high. Of course when we said success we didn't mean exactly what Mrs. Highmore, for instance, meant. He used to quote at me, as a definition, something from a nameless page of my own, some stray dictum to the effect that the man of his craft had achieved it when of a beautiful subject his expression was complete. Wasn't Limbert's, in all conscience, complete?

III

And yet it was bang upon this completeness that the turn came, the turn I can't say of his fortune—for what was that?—but of his confidence, of his spirits and, what was more to the point, of his system. The whole occasion on which the first symptom flared out is before me as I write. I had met them both at dinner; they were diners who had reached the penultimate stage—the stage which in theory is a rigid selection and in practice a wan submission. It was late in the season, and stronger spirits than theirs were broken; the night was close and the air of the banquet such as to restrict conversation to the refusal of dishes and consumption to the sniffing of a flower. It struck me all the

the more that Mrs. Limbert was flying her flag. As vivid as a page of her husband's prose, she had one of those flickers of freshness that are the miracle of her sex and one of those expensive dresses that are the miracle of ours. She had also a neat brougham in which she had offered to rescue an old lady from the possibilities of a queer cab-horse; so that when she had rolled away with her charge I proposed a walk home with her husband, whom I had overtaken on the doorstep. Before I had gone far with him he told me he had news for me—he had accepted, of all people and of all things, an "editorial position." It had come to pass that very day, from one hour to another, without time for appeals or ponderations: Mr. Bousefield, the proprietor of a "high-class monthly," making, as they said, a sudden change, had dropped on him heavily out of the blue. It was all right—there was a salary and an idea, and both of them, as such things went, rather high. We took our way slowly through the empty streets, and in the explanations and revelations that, as we lingered under lamp-posts, I drew from him, I found, with an apprehension that I tried to gulp down, a foretaste of the bitter end. He told me more than he had ever told me yet. He couldn't balance accounts—that was the trouble; his expenses were too rising a tide. It was absolutely necessary that he should at last make money, and now he must work only for that. The need, this last year, had gathered the force of a crusher; it had rolled over him and laid him on his back. He had his scheme; this time he knew what he was about; on some good occasion, with leisure to talk it over, he would tell me the blessed whole. His editorship would help him, and for the rest he must help himself. If he couldn't, they would have to do something fundamental—change their life altogether, give up London, move into the country, take a house at thirty pounds a year, send their children to the Board-school. I

 saw

saw that he was excited, and he admitted that he was: he had waked out of a trance. He had been on the wrong tack; he had piled mistake on mistake. It was the vision of his remedy that now excited him: ineffably, grotesquely simple, it had yet come to him only within a day or two. No, he wouldn't tell me what it was: he would give me the night to guess, and if I shouldn't guess it would be because I was as big an ass as himself. However, a lone man *might* be an ass: it was nobody's business. He had five people to carry, and the back must be adjusted to the burden. He was just going to adjust his back. As to the editorship, it was simply heaven-sent, being not at all another case of *The Blackport Beacon*, but a case of the very opposite. The proprietor, the great Mr. Bousefield, had approached him precisely because his name, which was to be on the cover, *didn't* represent the chatty. The whole thing was to be—oh, on fiddling little lines, of course—a protest against the chatty. Bousefield wanted him to be himself; it was for himself Bousefield had picked him out. Wasn't it beautiful and brave of Bousefield? He wanted literature, he saw the great reaction coming, the way the cat was going to jump. "Where will you get literature?" I wofully asked; to which he replied with a laugh that what he had to get was not literature, but only what Bousefield would take for it.

In that single phrase, without more ado, I discovered his famous remedy. What was before him for the future was not to do his work, but to do what somebody else would take for it. I had the question out with him on the next opportunity, and of all the lively discussions into which we had been destined to drift it lingers in my mind as the liveliest. This was not, I hasten to add, because I disputed his conclusions: it was an effect of the very force with which, when I had fathomed his wretched premises, I embraced them. It was very well to talk, with Jane Highmore,

Highmore, about his standing alone; the eminent relief of this position had brought him to the verge of ruin. Several persons admired his books—nothing was less contestable; but they appeared to have a mortal objection to acquiring them by subscription or by purchase: they begged, or borrowed, or stole, they delegated one of the party perhaps to commit the volumes to memory and repeat them, like the bards of old, to listening multitudes. Some ingenious theory was required, at any rate, to account for the inexorable limits of his circulation. It wasn't a thing for five people to live on; therefore either the objects circulated must change their nature, or the organisms to be nourished must. The former change was perhaps the easier to consider first. Limbert considered it with extraordinary ingenuity from that time on, and the ingenuity, greater even than any I had yet had occasion to admire in him, made the whole next stage of his career rich in curiosity and suspense.

"I have been butting my head against a wall," he had said in those hours of confidence; "and with the same sublime imbecility, if you'll allow me the word, you, my dear fellow, have kept sounding the charge. We've sat prating here of 'success,' heaven help us, like chanting monks in a cloister, hugging the sweet delusion that it lies somewhere in the work itself, in the expression, as you said, of one's subject, or the intensification, as somebody else somewhere said, of one's note. One has been going on, in short, as if the only thing to do were to accept the law of one's talent, and thinking that if certain consequences didn't follow, it was only because one hadn't accepted enough. My disaster has served me right—I mean for using that ignoble word at all. It's a mere distributor's, a mere hawker's word. What *is* 'success' anyhow? When a book's right, it's right—shame to it surely if it isn't. When it sells it sells—it brings money like potatoes or beer.

beer. If there's dishonour one way and inconvenience the other, it certainly is comfortable, but it as certainly isn't glorious, to have escaped them. People of delicacy don't brag either about their probity or about their luck. Success be hanged!—I want to sell. It's a question of life and death. I must study the way. I've studied too much the other way—I know the other way now, every inch of it. I must cultivate the market—it's a science like another. I must go in for an infernal cunning. It will be very amusing, I foresee that; the bustle of life will become positively exhilarating. I haven't been obvious—I must *be* obvious. I haven't been popular—I must *be* popular. It's another art—or perhaps it isn't an art at all. It's something else; one must find out *what* it is. Is it something awfully queer?—you blush!—something barely decent? All the greater incentive to curiosity! Curiosity's an immense motive; we shall have tremendous larks. They all do it; it's only a question of how. Of course I've everything to unlearn; but what is life, as Jane Highmore says, but a lesson? I must get all I can, all she can give me, from Jane. She can't explain herself much; she's all intuition; her processes are obscure; it's the spirit that swoops down and catches her up. But I must study her reverently in her works. Yes, you've defied me before, but now my loins are girded: I declare I'll read one of them—I really will: I'll put it through if I perish!"

I won't pretend that he made all these remarks at once; but there wasn't one that he didn't make at one time or another, for suggestion and occasion were plentiful enough, his life being now given up altogether to his new necessity. It wasn't a question of his having or not having, as they say, my intellectual sympathy: the brute force of the pressure left no room for judgment; it made all emotion a mere recourse to the spy-glass. I watched

watched him as I should have watched a long race or a long chase, irresistibly siding with him, but much occupied with the calculation of odds. I confess indeed that my heart, for the endless stretch that he covered so fast, was often in my throat. I saw him peg away over the sun-dappled plain, I saw him double and wind and gain and lose ; and all the while I secretly entertained a conviction. I wanted him to feed his many mouths, but at the bottom of all things was my sense that if he should succeed in doing so in this particular way I should think less well of him, and I had an absolute terror of that. Meanwhile, so far as I could, I backed him up, I helped him : all the more that I had warned him immensely at first, smiled with a compassion it was very good of him not to have found exasperating, over the complacency of his assumption that a man could escape from himself. Ray Limbert, at all events, would certainly never escape ; but one could make believe for him, make believe very hard—an undertaking in which, at first, Mr. Bousefield was visibly a blessing. Limbert was delightful on the business of this being at last my chance too—my chance, so miraculously vouchsafed, to appear with a certain luxuriance. He didn't care how often he printed me, for wasn't it exactly in my direction Mr. Bousefield held that the cat was going to jump ? This was the least he could do for me. I might write on anything I liked—on anything at least but Mr. Limbert's second manner. He didn't wish attention strikingly called to his second manner ; it was to operate insidiously ; people were to be left to believe they had discovered it long ago. "Ralph Limbert ?—why, when did we ever live without him ?"—that's what he wanted them to say. Besides, they hated manners—let sleeping dogs lie. His understanding with Mr. Bousefield—on which he had had not at all to insist ; it was the excellent man who insisted—was that he should run one of his beautiful

beautiful stories in the magazine. As to the beauty of his story, however, Limbert was going to be less admirably straight than as to the beauty of everything else. That was another reason why I mustn't write about his new line: Mr. Bousefield was not to be too definitely warned that such a periodical was exposed to prostitution. By the time he should find it out for himself, the public—*le gros public*—would have bitten, and then perhaps he would be conciliated and forgive. Everything else would be literary in short, and above all *I* would be; only Ralph Limbert wouldn't—he'd chuck up the whole thing sooner. He'd be vulgar, he'd be rudimentary, he'd be atrocious: he'd be elaborately what he hadn't been before.

I duly noticed that he had more trouble in making "everything else" literary than he had at first allowed for; but this was largely counteracted by the ease with which he was able to obtain that that mark should not be overshot. He had taken well to heart the old lesson of the *Beacon*; he remembered that he was after all there to keep his contributors down much rather than to keep them up. I thought at times that he kept them down a trifle too far, but he assured me that I needn't be nervous: he had his limit—his limit was inexorable. He would reserve pure vulgarity for his serial, over which he was sweating blood and water; elsewhere it should be qualified by the prime qualification, the mediocrity that attaches, that endears. Bousefield, he allowed, was proud, was difficult: nothing was really good enough for him but the middling good; but he himself was prepared for adverse comment, resolute for his noble course. Hadn't Limbert moreover, in the event of a charge of laxity from headquarters, the great strength of being able to point to my contributions? Therefore I must let myself go, I must abound in my peculiar sense, I must be a resource in case of accidents. Limbert's vision

of

of accidents hovered mainly over the sudden awakening of Mr. Bousefield to the stuff that, in the department of fiction, his editor was smuggling in. He would then have to confess in all humility that this was not what the good old man wanted, but I should be all the more there as a compensatory specimen. I would cross the scent with something showily impossible, splendidly unpopular—I must be sure to have something on hand. I always had plenty on hand—poor Limbert needn't have worried : the magazine was forearmed, each month, by my care, with a retort to any possible accusation of trifling with Mr. Bousefield's standard. He had admitted to Limbert, after much consideration indeed, that he was prepared to be perfectly human ; but he had added that he was not prepared for an abuse of this admission. The thing in the world I think I least felt myself was an abuse, even though (as I had never mentioned to my friendly editor) I too had my project for a bigger reverberation. I daresay I trusted mine more than I trusted Limbert's ; at all events, the golden mean in which, as an editor, in the special case, he saw his salvation, was something I should be most sure of if I were to exhibit it myself. I exhibited it, month after month, in the form of a monstrous levity, only praying heaven that my editor might now not tell me, as he had so often told me, that my result was awfully good. I knew what that would signify—it would signify, sketchily speaking, disaster. What he did tell me, heartily, was that it was just what his game required: his new line had brought with it an earnest assumption—earnest save when we privately laughed about it—of the locutions proper to real bold enterprise. If I tried to keep him in the dark even as he kept Mr. Bousefield, there was nothing to show that I was not tolerably successful : each case therefore presented a promising analogy for the other. He never noticed my descent, and it was accordingly possible that Mr. Bousefield would never notice his.

But

But would nobody notice it at all?—that was a question that added a prospective zest to one's possession of a critical sense. So much depended upon it that I was rather relieved than otherwise *not to* know the answer too soon. I waited in fact a year—the year for which Limbert had cannily engaged, on trial, with Mr. Bousefield; the year as to which, through the same sharpened shrewdness, it had been conveyed in the agreement between them that Mr. Bousefield was not to intermeddle. It had been Limbert's general prayer that we would, during this period, let him quite alone. His terror of my direct rays was a droll, dreadful force that always operated: he explained it by the fact that I understood him too well, expressed too much of his intention, saved him too little from himself. The less he was saved, the more he didn't sell: I literally interpreted, and that was simply fatal.

I held my breath, accordingly; I did more—I closed my eyes, I guarded my treacherous ears. He induced several of us to do that (of such devotions we were capable) so that not even glancing at the thing from month to month, and having nothing but his shamed, anxious silence to go by, I participated only vaguely in the little hum that surrounded his act of sacrifice. It was blown about the town that the public would be surprised; it was hinted, it was printed, that he was making a desperate bid. His new work was spoken of as "more calculated for general acceptance." These tidings produced in some quarters much reprobation, and nowhere more, I think, than on the part of certain persons who had never read a word of him, or assuredly had never spent a shilling on him, and who hung for hours over the other attractions of the newspaper that announced his abasement. So much asperity cheered me a little—seemed to signify that he might really be doing something. On the other hand, I had a distinct alarm; some one sent me, for some alien reason, an American journal (containing

(containing frankly more than that source of discomposure) in which was quoted a passage from our friend's last instalment. The passage—I couldn't for my life help reading it—was simply superb. Ah, he *would* have to move to the country if that was the worst he could do! It gave me a pang to see how little, after all, he had improved since the days of his competition with Pat Moyle. There was nothing in the passage quoted in the American paper that Pat would for a moment have owned. During the last weeks, as the opportunity of reading the complete thing drew near, one's suspense was barely endurable, and I shall never forget the July evening on which I put it to rout. Coming home to dinner I found the two volumes on my table, and I sat up with them half the night, dazed, bewildered, rubbing my eyes, wondering at the monstrous joke. *Was* it a monstrous joke, his second manner—was *this* the new line, the desperate bid, the scheme for more general acceptance and the remedy for material failure? Had he made a fool of all his following, or had he, most injuriously, made a still bigger fool of himself? Obvious?—where the deuce was it obvious? Popular?—how on earth could it be popular? The thing was charming with all his charm and powerful with all his power; it was an unscrupulous, an unsparing, a shameless, merciless masterpiece. It was, no doubt, like the old letters to the *Beacon*, the worst he could do; but the perversity of the effort, even though heroic, had been frustrated by the purity of the gift. Under what illusion had he laboured, with what wavering, treacherous compass had he steered? His honour was inviolable, his measurements were all wrong. I was thrilled with the whole impression and with all that came crowding in its train. It was too grand a collapse—it was too hideous a triumph; I exulted almost with tears—I lamented with a strange delight. Indeed as the short night waned, and, threshing about in my emotion, I fidgeted

fidgeted to my high-perched window for a glimpse of the summer dawn, I became at last aware that I was staring at it out of eyes that had compassionately and admiringly filled. The eastern sky, over the London housetops, had a wonderful tragic crimson. That was the colour of his magnificent mistake.

IV

If something less had depended on my impression I daresay I should have communicated it as soon as I had swallowed my breakfast; but the case was so embarrassing that I spent the first half of the day in reconsidering it, dipping into the book again, almost feverishly turning its leaves and trying to extract from them, for my friend's benefit, some symptom of re-assurance, some ground for felicitation. But this rash challenge had consequences merely dreadful; the wretched volumes, imperturbable and impeccable, with their shyer secrets and their second line of defence, were like a beautiful woman more denuded or a great symphony on a new hearing. There was something quite exasperating in the way, as it were, they stood up to me. I couldn't, however, be dumb—that was to give the wrong tinge to my disappointment; so that, later in the afternoon, taking my courage in both hands, I approached, with a vain indirectness, poor Limbert's door. A smart victoria waited before it, in which, from the bottom of the street, I saw that a lady who had apparently just issued from the house was settling herself. I recognised Jane Highmore and instantly paused till she should drive down to me. She presently met me half-way and as soon as she saw me stopped her carriage in agitation. This was a relief—it postponed a moment the sight of that pale, fine face of Limbert's

Limbert's fronting me for the right verdict. I gathered from the flushed eagerness with which Mrs. Highmore asked me if I had heard the news that a verdict of some sort had already been rendered.

"What news?—about the book?"

"About that horrid magazine. They're shockingly upset. He has lost his position—he has had a fearful flare-up with Mr. Bousefield."

I stood there blank, but not unconscious, in my blankness, of how history repeats itself. There came to me across the years Maud's announcement of their ejection from the *Beacon*, and dimly, confusedly the same explanation was in the air. This time, however, I had been on my guard; I had had my suspicion. "He has made it too flippant?" I found breath after an instant to inquire.

Mrs. Highmore's blankness exceeded my own. "Too 'flippant'? He has made it too oracular. Mr. Bousefield says he has killed it." Then perceiving my stupefaction: "Don't you know what has happened?" she pursued: "isn't it because in his trouble, poor love, he has sent for you, that you've come? You've heard nothing at all? Then you had better know before you see them. Get in here with me—I'll take you a turn and tell you." We were close to the Park, the Regent's, and when with extreme alacrity I had placed myself beside her and the carriage had begun to enter it she went on: "It was what I feared, you know. It reeked with culture. He keyed it up too high."

I felt myself sinking in the general collapse. "What are you talking about?"

"Why, about that beastly magazine. They're all on the streets. I shall have to take mamma."

I pulled

I pulled myself together. "What is it, then, Mr. Bousefield want?" She said he wanted to see me.

"Is Mr. Ray there?"

"Mr. Bousefield said I was to say he was," she replied.

"Well, Ray manages—he runs Mr. Bousefield on literally. It appears the thing has been quite resultful, but the proprietor himself is anything because he has threatened to leave the entire place free. He describes himself as having found there a lever and used his shirt for it. Ray is now on the very verge of success, and he thinks he'll break me. Miss says he did break me quite terribly. He came in the house and let poor Ray have it. Ray gave it him back; he reminded him of his own idea of the way the play was going to turn."

"Oh," said Miss Bousefield. "Has Bousefield abandoned that idea? Isn't he going to turn?"

Miss Bousefield hesitated. "It appears that she doesn't seem in a hurry. She's very sure, his uncle and he mean of her. He thinks Ray's original idea a fine. Mr. Bousefield says; but I'm not saying it does, you know," said my companion, "that Ray isn't original."

Mixed with my memories of the previous twenty-four hours, I was conscious of a reason to disagree with her.

"He has shown he can be quite sure enough."

"Has shown?" she cried. "Why, it struck me so often—especially in the last movement of all—as pure drivel!"

"He hasn't a worse phrase than he." Mr. Bousefield says that he wrote things that were suggestive and clever, things that he could point to with pride. But he contends that Ray didn't allow for human weakness. He gave everything in too stiff doses."

Dreadfully, I fear, to my neighbour, I winced at her words; I felt a prick

a prick that made me meditate. Then I said: "Is that, by chance, the way he gave *me*?" Mrs. Highmore remained silent so long that I had somehow the sense of a fresh pang; and after a minute, turning in my seat, I laid my hand on her arm, fixed my eyes upon her face and pursued pressingly: "Do you suppose it to be to my 'Occasional Remarks' that Mr. Bousefield refers?"

At last she met my look. "Can you bear to hear it?"

"I think I can bear anything now."

"Well, then, it was really what I wanted to give you an inkling of. It's largely over you that they've quarrelled. Mr. Bousefield wants him to chuck you."

I grabbed her arm again. "And Limbert *won't*?"

"He seems to cling to you. Mr. Bousefield says no magazine can afford you."

I gave a laugh that agitated the very coachman. "Why, my dear lady, has he any idea of my price?"

"It isn't your price—he says you're dear at any price, you do so much to sink the ship. Your 'Remarks' are called 'Occasional,' but nothing could be more deadly regular: you're there month after month, and you're never anywhere else. And you supply no public want."

"I supply the most delicious irony."

"So Ray appears to have declared. Mr. Bousefield says that's not in the least a public want. No one can make out what you're talking about, and no one would care if he could. I'm only quoting *him*, mind."

"Quote, quote—if Limbert holds out. I think I must leave you now, please: I must rush back to express to him what I feel."

"I'll drive you to his door. That isn't all," said Mrs. Highmore. And on the way, when the carriage had turned, she communicated

communicated the rest. "Mr. Bousefield really arrived with an ultimatum: it had the form of something or other by Minnie Meadows."

"Minnie Meadows?" I was stupefied.

"The new lady-humourist every one is talking about. It's the first of a series of screaming sketches for which poor Ray was to find a place."

"Is *that* Mr. Bousefield's idea of literature?"

"No, but he says it's the public's, and you've got to take *some* account of the public. *Aux grands maux les grands remèdes.* They had a tremendous lot of ground to make up, and no one would make it up like Minnie. She would be the best concession they could make to human weakness; she would strike this note, at least, of showing that it was not going to be quite all—well, *you*. Now Ray draws the line at Minnie; he won't stoop to Minnie; he declines to touch, to look at Minnie. When Mr. Bousefield—rather imperiously, I believe—made Minnie a *sine quâ non* of his retention of his post he said something rather violent, told him to go to some unmentionable place and take Minnie with him. That of course put the fat on the fire. They had really a considerable scene."

"So had he with the *Beacon* man," I musingly replied. "Poor dear, he seems born for considerable scenes! It's on Minnie, then, that they've really split?" Mrs. Highmore exhaled her despair in a sound which I took for an assent, and when we had rolled a little further I rather inconsequently, and to her visible surprise, broke out of my reverie. "It will never do in the world—he *must* stoop to Minnie!"

"It's too late—and what I've told you isn't all. Mr. Bousefield raises another objection."

"What other, pray?"

"Can't

"Can't you guess?"

I wondered. "No more of his fiction?"

"Not a line. That's something else the magazine can't stand. Now that his novel has run its course, Mr. Bousefield is distinctly disappointed."

I fairly bounded in my place. "Then it may do?"

Mrs. Highmore looked bewildered. "Why so, if he finds it too dull?"

"Dull? Ralph Limbert? He's as sharp as a needle!"

"It comes to the same thing. Mr. Bousefield had counted on something that would have a wider acceptance." I collapsed again; my flicker of elation dropped to a throb of quieter comfort; and after a moment's silence I asked my neighbour if she had herself read the work our friend had just put forth. "No," she replied, "I gave him my word at the beginning, at his urgent request, that I wouldn't."

"Not even as a book?"

"He begged me never to look at it at all. He said he was trying a low experiment. Of course I knew what he meant, and I entreated him to let me, just for curiosity, take a peep. But he was firm, he declared he couldn't bear the thought that a woman like me should see him in the depths."

"He's only, thank God, in the depths of distress," I replied. "His experiment's nothing worse than a failure."

"Then Bousefield *is* right—his circulation won't budge?"

"It won't move one, as they say in Fleet Street. The book has extraordinary beauty."

"Poor duck, and he tried so hard!" Jane Highmore sighed with real indulgence. "What *will*, then, become of them?"

I was silent an instant. "You must take your mother."

She was silent too. "I must speak of it to Cecil!" she then exclaimed.

exclaimed. Cecil is Mr. Highmore, who then entertained, I knew, strong views on the inadjustability of circumstances in general to the idiosyncrasies of Mrs. Stannace. He held it supremely happy that in an important relation she should have met her match. Her match was Ray Limbert—not much of a writer, but a practical man. "The dear things still think, you know," my companion continued, "that the book will be the beginning of their fortune. Their illusion, if you're right, will be rudely dispelled."

"That's what makes me dread to face them. I've just spent with his volumes an unforgettable night. His illusion has lasted because so many of us have been pledged, till this moment, to turn our faces the other way. We haven't known the truth and have therefore had nothing to say. Now that we do know it indeed we have practically quite as little. I hang back from the threshold. How can I follow up with a burst of enthusiasm such a catastrophe as Mr. Bousefield's visit?"

As I turned uneasily about my neighbour more comfortably snuggled. "Well, I'm glad I haven't read him, then, and have nothing unpleasant to say to him!" We had drawn near to Limbert's door again, and I made the coachman stop short of it. "But he'll try again, with that determination of his: he'll build his hopes on the next time."

"On what else has he built them from the very first? It's never the present, for him, that bears the fruit; that's always postponed and for somebody else; there has always to be another try. I admit that his idea of a 'new line' has made him try harder than ever. It makes no difference," I brooded, still timorously lingering; "his achievement of his necessity, his hope of a market, will continue to attach themselves to the future. But the next time will disappoint him as each last time has done—and then the next, and the next, and the next!"

I found

I found myself seeing it all with an almost inspired clearness: it evidently cast a chill on Mrs. Highmore. Then what on earth will become of him?" she plaintively asked.

"I don't think I particularly care what may become of *him*," I returned, with a conscious, reckless increase of my exaltation; "I feel it almost enough to be concerned with what may become of one's enjoyment of him. I don't know, in short, what will become of his circulation; I am only quite at my ease as to what will become of his work. It will simply keep all its value. He'll try again for the common with what he'll believe to be a still more infernal cunning, and again the common will fatally elude him, for his infernal cunning will have been only his genius in an ineffectual disguise." We sat drawn up by the pavement, and I faced poor Limbert's future as I saw it. It relieved me in a manner to know the worst, and I prophesied with an assurance which, as I look back upon it, strikes me as rather remarkable. "*Que voulez-vous?*" I went on; "you can't make of a silk purse a sow's ear! It's grievous indeed if you like—there are people who can't be vulgar for trying. *He* can't—it wouldn't come off, I promise you, even once. It takes more than trying—it comes by grace. It happens not to be given to Limbert to fall. He belongs to the heights—he breathes there, he lives there, and it's accordingly to the heights I must ascend," I said as I took leave of my conductress, "to carry him this wretched news from where *we* move!"

V

A few months were sufficient to show how right I had been about his circulation. It didn't move one, as I had said; it stopped short in the same place, fell off in a sheer descent, like some

precipice admired of tourists. The public, in other words, drew the line for him as sharply as he had drawn it for Minnie Meadows. Minnie had skipped with a flouncing caper over his line, however; whereas the mark traced by a lustier cudgel had been a barrier insurmountable to Limbert. Those next times I had spoken of to Jane Highmore, I see them simplified by retrocession. Again and again he made his desperate bid—again and again he tried to. His rupture with Mr. Bousefield caused him, I fear, in professional circles, to be thought impracticable, and I am perfectly aware, to speak candidly, that no sordid advantage ever accrued to him from such public patronage of my performances as he had occasionally been in a position to offer. I reflect for my comfort that any injury I may have done him by untimely application of a faculty of analysis which could point to no converts gained by honourable exercise was at least equalled by the injury he did himself. More than once, as I have hinted, I held my tongue at his request, but my frequent plea that such favours weren't politic never found him, when in other connections there was an opportunity to give me a lift, anything but indifferent to the danger of the association. He let them have me, in a word, whenever he could; sometimes in periodicals in which he had credit, sometimes only at dinner. He talked about me when he couldn't get me in, but it was always part of the bargain that I shouldn't make him a topic. "How can I successfully serve you if you do?" he used to ask: he was more afraid than I thought he ought to have been of the charge of tit for tat. I didn't care, and I never could distinguish tat from tit; but, as I have intimated, I dropped into silence really more than anything else because there was a certain fascinated observation of his course which was quite testimony enough and to which, in this huddled conclusion of it, he practically reduced me.

I see it all foreshortened, his wonderful remainder—see it from the

the end backward, with the direction widening toward me as if on a level with the eye. The migration to the country promised him at first great things—smaller expenses, larger leisure, conditions eminently conducive, on each occasion, to the possible triumph of the next time. Mrs. Stannace, who altogether disapproved of it, gave as one of her reasons that her son-in-law, living mainly in a village, on the edge of a goose-green, would be deprived of that contact with the great world which was indispensable to the painter of manners. She had the showiest arguments for keeping him in touch, as she called it, with good society; wishing to know, with some force, where, from the moment he ceased to represent it from observation, the novelist could be said to be. In London, fortunately, a clever man was just a clever man; there were charming houses in which a person of Ray's undoubted ability, even though without the knack of making the best use of it, could always be sure of a quiet corner from which he might watch the social kaleidoscope. But the kaleidoscope of the goose-green, what in the world was that, and what such delusive thrift as drives about the land (with a fearful account for flies from the inn) to leave cards on the country magnates? This solicitude for Limbert's subject-matter was the specious colour with which, deeply determined not to affront mere tolerance in a cottage, Mrs. Stannace overlaid her indisposition to place herself under the heel of Cecil Highmore. She knew that he ruled Upstairs as well as down, and she clung to the fable of the association of interests in the north of London. The Highmores had a better address—they lived now in Stanhope Gardens; but Cecil was fearfully artful—he wouldn't hear of an association of interests, nor treat with his mother-in-law save as a visitor. She didn't like false positions; but on the other hand she didn't like the sacrifice of everything she was accustomed to.

Her

Her universe, at any rate, was a universe all of card-leavings and charming houses, and it was fortunate that she couldn't, Upstairs, catch the sound of the doom to which, in his little grey den, describing to me his diplomacy, Limbert consigned alike the country magnates and the opportunities of London. Despoiled of every guarantee, she went to Stanhope Gardens like a mere maidservant, with restrictions on her very luggage, while, during the year that followed this upheaval, Limbert, strolling with me on the goose-green, to which I often ran down, played extravagantly over the theme that, with what he was now going in for, it was a positive comfort not to have the social kaleidoscope. With a cold-blooded trick in view, what had life, or manners, or the best society, or flies from the inn, to say to the question? It was as good a place as another to play his new game. He had found a quieter corner than any corner of the great world, and a damp old house at sixpence a year, which, beside leaving him all his margin to educate his children, would allow of the supreme luxury of his frankly presenting himself as a poor man. This was a convenience that *ces dames*, as he called them, had never yet fully permitted him.

It rankled in me at first to see his reward so meagre, his conquest so mean, but the simplification effected had a charm that I finally felt: it was a forcing-house for the three or four other fine miscarriages to which his scheme was evidently condemned. I limited him to three or four, having had my sharp impression, in spite of the perpetual broad joke of the thing, that a spring had really snapped within him on the occasion of that deeply disconcerting sequel to the episode of his editorship. He never lost his sense of the grotesque want, in the difference made, of adequate relation to the effort that had been the intensest of his life. He had from that moment a charge of shot in him, and it slowly worked

worked its way to a vital part. As he met his embarrassments each year, with his punctual false remedy, I wondered periodically where he found the energy to return to the attack. He did it every time with a redder and redder rage, but it was clear to me that the fever must at last burn itself out. We got again and again the irrepressible work of art, but what did *he* get, poor man, who wanted something so different? There were likewise odder questions than this in the matter, phenomena more curious and mysteries more puzzling, which often, for sympathy if not for illumination, I intimately discussed with Mrs. Limbert. She had her burdens, poor woman: after the removal from London, and after a considerable interval, she twice again became a mother. Mrs. Stannace too, in a more restricted sense, exhibited afresh, in relation to the home she had abandoned, the same exemplary character. In her poverty of guarantees, in Stanhope Gardens, there had been least of all, it appeared, a proviso that she shouldn't resentfully revert again from Goneril to Regan. She came down to the goose-green like Lear himself, with fewer knights, or at least baronets, and the joint household was at last patched up. It fell to pieces and was put together more than once again before poor Limbert died. He was ridden to the end by the superstition that he had broken up Mrs. Stannace's original home on pretences that had proved hollow, and that if he hadn't given Maud what she might have had he could at least give her back her mother. I was always sure that a sense of the compensations he owed was half the motive of the dogged pride with which he tried to wake up the libraries. I believed Mrs. Stannace still had money, though she pretended that, called upon at every turn to retrieve deficits, she had long since poured it into the general fund. This conviction haunted me; I suspected her of secret hoards, and I said to myself that she couldn't be so infamous as not, some day on her

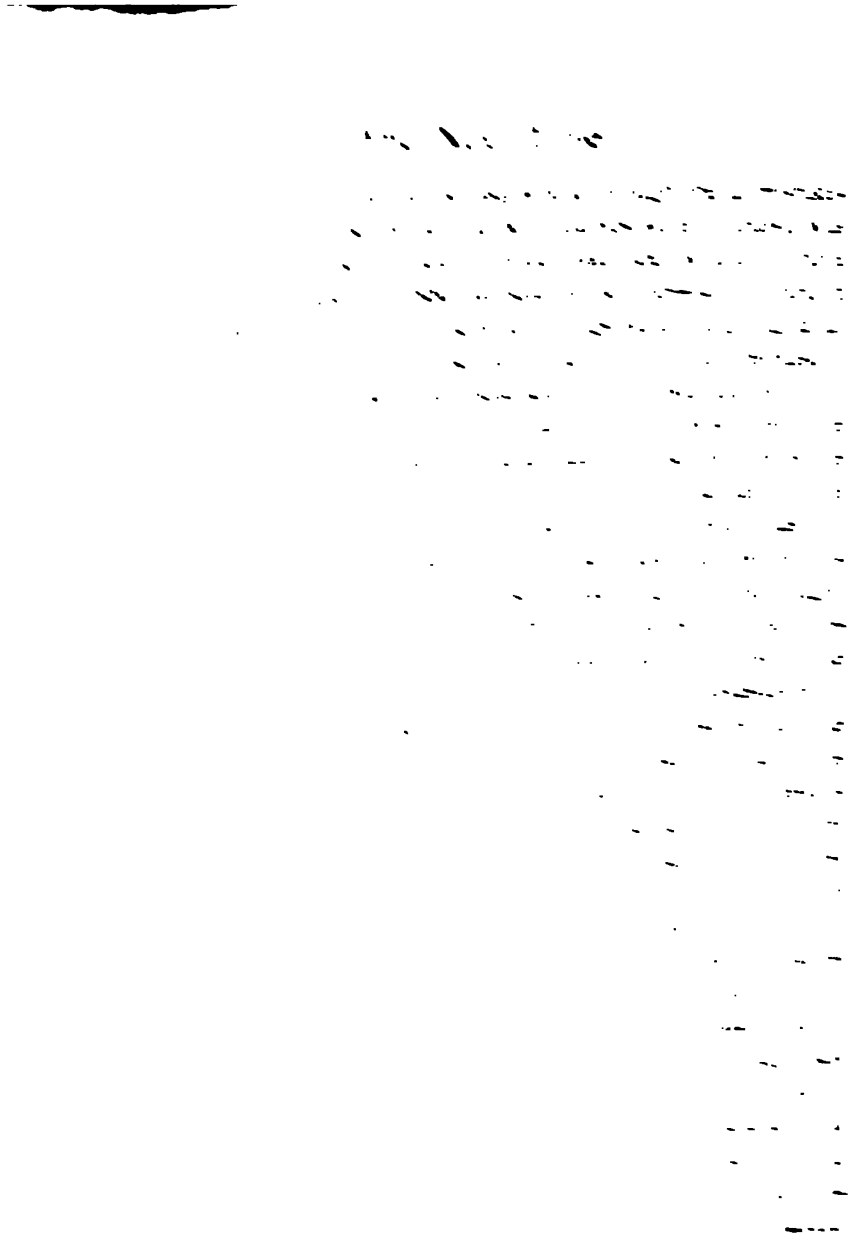
her deathbed, to leave everything to her less opulent daughter. My compassion for the Limberts led me to hover perhaps indiscreetly round that closing scene, to dream of some happy day when such an accession of means would make up a little for their present penury.

This, however, was crude comfort, as, in the first place, I had nothing definite to go by, and, in the second, I held it for more and more indicated that Ray wouldn't outlive her. I never ventured to sound him as to what in this particular he hoped or feared, for after the crisis marked by his leaving London I had new scruples about suffering him to be reminded of where he fell short. The poor man was in truth humiliated, and there were things as to which that kept us both silent. In proportion as he tried more fiercely for the market the old plaintive arithmetic, fertile in jokes, dropped from our conversation. We joked immensely still about the process, but our treatment of the results became sparing and superficial. He talked as much as ever, with monstrous arts and borrowed hints, of the traps he kept setting, but we all agreed to take merely for granted that the animal was caught. This propriety had really dawned upon me the day that, after Mr. Bousefield's visit, Mrs. Highmore put me down at his door. Mr. Bousefield, on that occasion, had been served up to me anew, but after we had disposed of him we came to the book, which I was obliged to confess I had already rushed through. It was from that moment—the moment at which my terrible impression of it had blinked out at his anxious query—that the image of his scared face was to abide with me. I couldn't attenuate then—the cat was out of the bag; but later, each of the next times I did, I acknowledge, attenuate. We all did religiously, so far as was possible; we cast ingenious ambiguities over the strong places, the beauties that betrayed him most, and found ourselves in the queer position of

of admirers banded to mislead a confiding artist. If we stifled our cheers, however, and dissimulated our joy, our fond hypocrisy accomplished little, for Limbert's finger was on a pulse that told a plainer story. It was a satisfaction to enjoy a greater freedom with his wife, who entered at last, much to her honour, into the conspiracy, and whose sense of responsibility was flattered by the frequency of our united appeal to her for some answer to the marvellous riddle. We had all turned it over till we were tired of it, threshing out the question why the note he strained every chord to pitch for common ears should invariably insist on addressing itself to the angels. Being, as it were, ourselves the angels, we had only a limited quarrel in each case with the event; but its inconsequent character, given the forces set in motion, was peculiarly baffling. It was like an interminable sum that wouldn't come straight; nobody had the time to handle so many figures. Limbert gathered, to make his pudding, dry bones and dead husks; how then was one to formulate the law that made the dish prove a feast? What was the cerebral treachery that defied his own vigilance? There was some obscure interference of taste, some obsession of the exquisite. All one could say was that genius was a fatal disturber or that the unhappy man had no effectual *flair*. When he went abroad to gather garlic he came home with heliotrope.

I hasten to add that if Mrs. Limbert was not directly illuminating, she was yet rich in anecdote and example, having found a refuge from mystification exactly where the rest of us had found it, in a more devoted embrace and the sense of a finer glory. Her disappointments and eventually her privations had been many, her discipline severe; but she had ended by accepting the long grind of life, and was now quite willing to be ground in good company. She was essentially one of us—she always understood.

Touching



nounced ominously weak, and it was enjoined upon him with some sharpness that he should lend himself to no worries. It might have struck me as on the cards that his worries would now be surmountable, for when he began to mend he expressed to me a conviction almost contagious that he had never yet made so adroit a bid as in the idea of *The Hidden Heart*. It is grimly droll to reflect that this superb little composition, the shortest of his novels, but perhaps the loveliest, was planned from the first as an "adventure-story" on approved lines. It was the way they all did the adventure-story that he tried most dauntlessly to emulate. I wonder how many readers ever divined to which of their bookshelves *The Hidden Heart* was so exclusively addressed. High medical advice early in the summer had been quite viciously clear as to the inconvenience that might ensue to him should he neglect to spend the winter in Egypt. He was not a man to neglect anything; but Egypt seemed to us all then as unattainable as a second edition. He finished *The Hidden Heart* with the energy of apprehension and desire, for if the book should happen to do what "books of that class," as the publisher said, sometimes did he might well have a fund to draw on. As soon as I read the deep and delicate thing I knew, as I had known in each case before, exactly how well it would do. Poor Limbert, in this long business, always figured to me an undiscourageable parent to whom only girls kept being born. A bouncing boy, a son and heir, was devoutly prayed for, and almanacks and old wives consulted; but the spell was inveterate, incurable, and *The Hidden Heart* proved, so to speak, but another female child. When the winter arrived accordingly Egypt was out of the question. Jane Highmore, to my knowledge, wanted to lend him money, and there were even greater devotees who did their best to induce him to lean on them. There was so marked a "movement" among his friends that a very

very considerable sum would have been at his disposal, but his stiffness was invincible : it had its root, I think, in his sense, on his own side, of sacrifices already made. He had sacrificed honour and pride, and he had sacrificed them precisely to the question of money. He would evidently, should he be able to go on, have to continue to sacrifice them, but it must be all in the way to which he had now, as he considered, hardened himself. He had spent years in plotting for favour, and since on favour he must live it could only be as a bargain and a price.

He got through the early part of the season better than we feared, and I went down, in great elation, to spend Christmas on the goose-green. He told me, late on Christmas eve, after our simple domestic revels had sunk to rest and we sat together by the fire, that he had been visited the night before, in wakeful hours, by the finest fancy for a really good thing that he had ever felt descend in the darkness. "It's just the vision of a situation that contains, upon my honour, everything," he said, "and I wonder that I've never thought of it before." He didn't describe it further, contrary to his common practice, and I only knew later, by Mrs. Limbert, that he had begun *Derogation* and that he was completely full of his subject. It was a subject, however, that he was not to live to treat. The work went on for a couple of months, in happy mystery, without revelations even to his wife. He had not invited her to help him to get up his case—she had not taken the field with him, as on his previous campaigns We only knew he was at it again, but that less even than ever had been said about the impression to be made on the market. I saw him in February, and thought him sufficiently at ease. The great thing was that he was immensely interested and was pleased with the omens. I got a strange, stirring sense that he had not consulted the usual ones, and indeed that he had floated away into a grand

a grand indifference, into a reckless consciousness of art. The voice of the market had suddenly grown faint and far; he had come back at the last, as people so often do, to one of the moods, the sincerities, of his prime. Was he really, with a blurred sense of the pressing, doing something now only for himself? We wondered and waited—we felt that he was a little confused. What had happened, I was afterwards satisfied, was that he had quite forgotten whether he generally sold or not. He had merely waked up one morning again in the country of the blue, and he had stayed there with a good conscience and a great idea. He stayed till death knocked at the gate, for the pen dropped from his hand only at the moment when, from sudden failure of the heart, his eyes, as he sank back in his chair, closed for ever. *Derogation* is a splendid fragment; it evidently would have been one of his high successes. How far it would have waked up the libraries is of course a very different question.

Earth's Complines

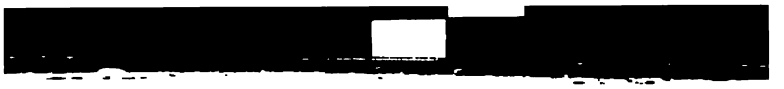
By Charles G. D. Roberts

BEFORE the feet of the dew
There came a call I knew,
Luring me into the garden
Where the tall white lilies grew.

I stood in the dusk between
The companies of green,
O'er whose aërial ranks
The lilies rose serene.

And the breathing air was stirred
By an unremembered word,
Soft, incommunicable—
And wings not of a bird.

I heard the spent blooms sighing,
The expectant buds replying;
I felt the life of the leaves,
Ephemeral, yet undying.



The spirits of earth were there
Thronging the shadowed air,
    Serving among the lilies
In an ecstasy of prayer.

Their speech I could not tell;
But the sap in each green cell,
    And the pure initiate petals,
They knew that language well.

I felt the soul of the trees—
Of the white, eternal seas—
    Of the flickering bats and night-moths
And my own soul kin to these.

And a spell came out of space
From the light of its starry place,
    And I saw in the deep of my heart
The image of God's face.

Durham

By F. G. Cotman



Durham

By F. G. Cotman





Tirala-tirala . . .

By Henry Harland

I WONDER what the secret of it is—why that little fragment of a musical phrase has always had this instant, irresistible power to move me. The tune of which it formed a part I have never heard; whether it was a merry tune or a sad tune, a pretty tune or a stupid one, I have no means of guessing. A sequence of six notes, like six words taken from the middle of a sentence, it stands quite by itself, detached, fortuitous. If I were to pick it out for you on the piano, you would scoff at it; you would tell me that it is altogether pointless and unsuggestive—that any six notes, struck at haphazard, would signify as much. And I certainly could not, with the least show of reason, maintain the contrary. I could only wonder the more why it has always had, for me, this very singular charm. As when I was a child, so now, after all these years, it is a sort of talisman in my hands, a thing to conjure with. I have but to breathe it never so softly to myself, and (if I choose) the actual world melts away, and I am journeying on wings in dreamland. Whether I choose or not, it always thrills my heart with responsive echoes, it always wakes a sad, sweet emotion.

* * *

I remember quite clearly the day when I first heard it; quite clearly

clearly, though it was more—oh, more than five-and-twenty years ago, and the days that went before and came after it have entirely lost their outlines, and merged into a vague golden blur. That day, too, as I look backwards, glows in the distance with a golden light ; and if I were to speak upon my impulse, I should vow it was a smiling day of June, clothed in sunshine and crowned with roses. But then, if I were to speak upon my impulse, I should vow that it was June at Saint-Graal the whole year round. When I stop to think, I remember that it was a rainy day, and that the ground was sprinkled with dead leaves. I remember standing at a window in my grandmother's room, and gazing out with rueful eyes. It rained doggedly, relentlessly—even, it seemed to me, defiantly, spitefully, as if it took a malicious pleasure in penning me up within doors. The mountains, the Pyrenees, a few miles to the south, were completely hidden by the veil of waters. The sodden leaves, brown patches on the lawn and in the pathways, struggled convulsively, like wounded birds, to fly from the gusts of wind, but fell back fluttering heavily. One could almost have touched the clouds, they hung so low, big ragged tufts of sad-coloured cotton-wool, blown rapidly through the air, just above the writhing tree-tops. Everywhere in the house there was a faint fragrance of burning wood : fires had been lighted to keep the dampness out.

* * *

Indeed, if it had been a fair day, my adventure could scarcely have befallen. I should have been abroad, in the garden or the forest, playing with André, our farmer's son ; angling, with a bit of red worsted as bait, for frogs in the pond ; trying to catch lizards on the terrace ; lying under a tree with *Don Quixote* or *Le Capitaine Fracasse ;* visiting Manuela in her cottage ; or perhaps, best

best of all, spending the afternoon with Hélène, at Granjolaye. It was because the rain interdicted these methods of amusement that I betook myself for solace to *Constantinople*.

* * *

I don't know why—I don't think any one knew why—that part of our house was called Constantinople ; but it had been called so from time immemorial, and we all accepted it as a matter of course. It was the topmost story of the East Wing—three rooms : one little room, by way of ante-chamber, into which you entered from a corkscrew staircase ; then another little room, at your left ; and then a big room, a long dim room, with only two windows, one at either end. And these rooms served as a sort of Hades for departed household gods. They were crowded, crowded to overflowing, with such wonderful old things! Old furniture —old straight-backed chairs, old card-tables, with green cloth tops, and brass claws for feet, old desks and cabinets, the dismembered relics of old four-post bedsteads ; old clothes—old hats, boots, cloaks—green silk calashes, like bonnets meant for the ladies of Brobdingnag—and old hoop-petticoats, the skeletons of dead toilets ; old books, newspapers, pictures ; old lamps and candlesticks, clocks, fire-irons, vases ; an old sedan-chair ; old spurs, old swords, old guns and pistols : generations upon generations of superannuated utilities and vanities, slumbering in one another's shadows, under a common sheet of dust, and giving off a thin, penetrating, ancient smell.

When it rained, Constantinople was my ever-present refuge. It was a land of penumbra and mystery, a realm of perpetual wonderment, a mine of inexhaustible surprises. I never visited it without finding something new, without getting a sensation. One day, when André was there with me, we both saw a ghost—yes,

yes, as plainly as at this moment I see the paper I'm writing on ; but I won't turn aside now to speak of that. And as for my finds, on two or three occasions, at least, they had more than a subjective metaphysical importance. The first was a chest filled with jewellery and trinkets, an iron chest, studded with nails, in size and shape like a small trunk, with a rounded lid. I dragged it out of a dark corner, from amidst a quantity of rubbish, and (it wasn't even locked !) fancy the eyes I made when I beheld its contents: half-a-dozen elaborately carved, high-backed tortoise-shell combs, ranged in a morocco case ; a beautiful old-fashioned watch, in the form of a miniature guitar ; an enamelled snuff-box ; and then no end of rings, brooches, buckles, seals, and watch-keys, set with precious stones—not *very* precious stones, perhaps—only garnets, amethysts, carnelians ; but mercy, how they glittered ! I ran off in great excitement to call my grandmother ; and she called my uncle Edmond ; and he, alas, applied the laws of seigniory to the transaction, and I saw my trover appropriated. My other important finds were appropriated also, but about them I did not care so much—they were only papers. One was a certificate, dated in the Year III, and attesting that my grandfather's father had taken the oath of allegiance to the Republic. As I was a fierce Legitimist, this document afforded me but moderate satisfaction. The other was a Map of the World, covering a sheet of cardboard nearly a yard square, executed in pen-and-ink, but with such a complexity of hair-lines, delicate shading, and ornate lettering, that, until you had examined it closely, you would have thought it a carefully finished steel-engraving. It was signed " Herminie de Pontacq, 1814 " ; that is to say, by my grandmother herself, who in 1814 had been twelve years old ; dear me, only twelve years old ! It was delightful and marvellous to think that my own grandmother, in 1814, had been so industrious, and painstaking, and

and accomplished a little girl. I assure you, I felt almost as proud as if I had done it myself.

* * *

The small room at the left of the ante-chamber was consecrated to the *roba* of an uncle of my grandfather's, who had been a sugar-planter in the province of New Orleans, in the reign of Louis XVI. He had also been a Colonel, and so the room was called the Colonel's room. Here were numberless mementoes of the South : great palm-leaf fans, conch-shells, and branches of coral, broad-brimmed hats of straw, monstrous white umbrellas, and, in a corner, a collection of long slender wands, ending in thick plumes of red and yellow feathers. These, I was informed, the sugar-planter's slaves, standing behind his chair, would flourish about his head, to warn off the importunate winged insects that abound *là-bas*. He had died at Paris in 1793, and of nothing more romantic than a malignant fever, foolish person, when he might so easily have been guillotined ! (It was a matter of permanent regret with me that *none* of our family had been guillotined.) But his widow had survived him for more than forty years, and her my grandmother remembered perfectly. A fat old Spanish Créole lady, fat and very lazy—oh, but very lazy indeed. At any rate, she used to demand the queerest services of the negress who was in constant attendance upon her. "Nanette, Nanette, tourne tête à moi. Veux"—summon your fortitude—"veux cracher !" Ah, well, we are told, they made less case of such details in those robust old times. How would she have fared, poor soul, had she fallen amongst us squeamish decadents ?

* * *

It was into the Colonel's room that I turned to-day. There was

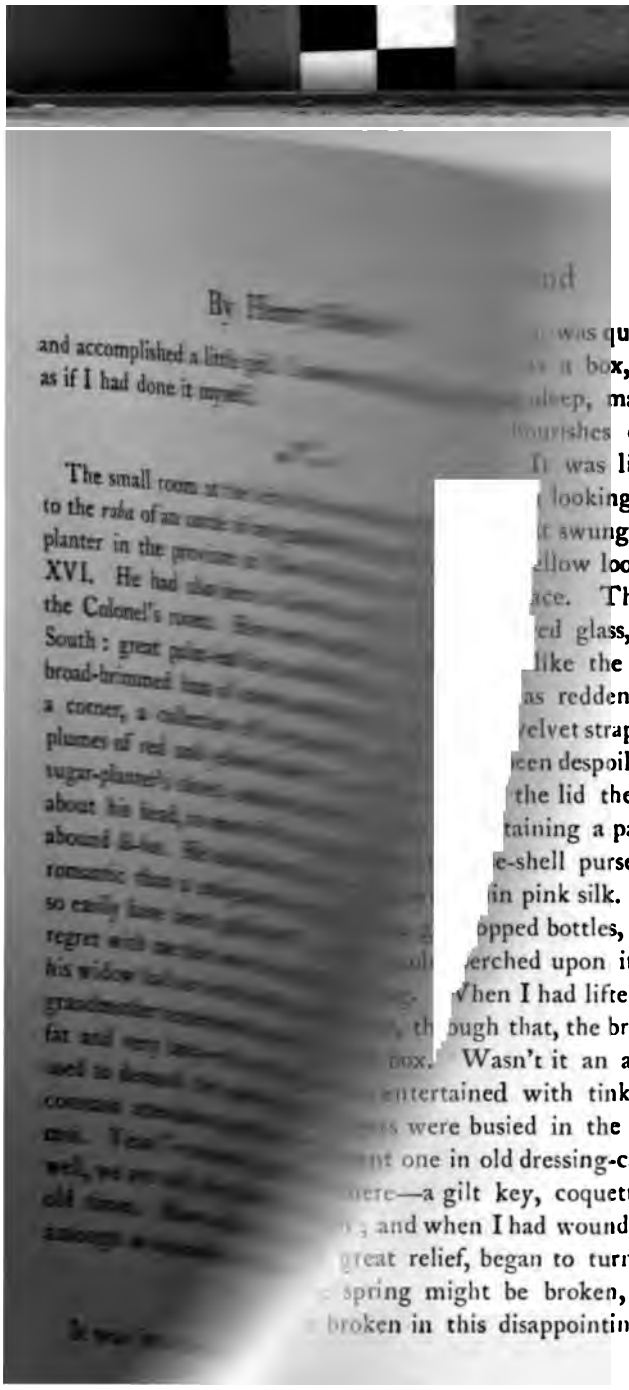
was a cupboard in its wall that I had never thoroughly examined. The lower shelves, indeed, I knew by heart; they held, for the most part, empty medicine bottles. But the upper ones?

* * *

I pause for a moment, and the flavour of that far-away afternoon comes back fresher in my memory than yesterday's. I am perched on a chair, in the dim light of Constantinople, at Saint-Graal; my nostrils are full of a musty, ancient smell; I can hear the rain pat-pattering on the roof, the wind whistling at the window, and, faintly, in a distant quarter of the house, my cousin Elodie playing her exercises monotonously on the piano. I am balancing myself on tip-toe, craning my neck, with only one care, one preoccupation, in the world—to get a survey of the top shelf of the closet in the Colonel's room. The next to the top, and the next below that, I already command; they are vacant of everything save dust. But the top one is still above my head, and how to reach it seems a terribly vexed problem, of which, for a little while, motionless, with bent brows, I am rapt in meditation. And then, suddenly, I have an inspiration—I see my way.

It was not for nothing that my great-aunt Radigonde—(think of having had a great-aunt named Radigonde, and yet never having seen her! She died before I was born—isn't Fate unkind?)—it was not for nothing that my great-aunt Radigonde, from 1820 till its extinction in 1838, had subscribed to the *Revue Rose—La Revue Rose; Echo du Bon Ton; Miroir de la Mode; paraissant tous les mois; dirigée par une Dame du Monde;* nor was it in vain, either, that my great-aunt Radigonde had had the annual volumes of this fashionable intelligencer bound. Three or four of them now, piled one above the other on my chair, lent me the altitude I needed; and the top shelf yielded up its secret.

It



was quite a business to
x, a square box,
eep, made of polished
ourishes of satin-wood.
It was lined with pink
looking-glass, in a pink
t swung up on a hinged
ellow looking-glass, that
ace. There were half-
ed glass, with tarnished
like the paw of a small
as reddened, as if it had
elvet straps that had once
een despoiled by an earlier
the lid the treasures were
taining a pair of scissors, a
e-shell purse, each prettily
in pink silk.

opped bottles, an oval of pink
erched upon it, was evidently
When I had lifted it, I saw, first,
ough that, the brass cylinder and
box. Wasn't it an amiable conceit,
ntertained with tinkling harmonies
s were busied in the composition of
nt one in old dressing-cases?
ere—a gilt key, coquettishly decorated
; and when I had wound the mechanism
great relief, began to turn—to my relief,
spring might be broken, or something:
broken in this disappointing world. The
cylinder

cylinder began to turn—but, alas, in silence, or almost in silence, emitting only a faintly audible, rusty gr-r-r-r, a sort of guttural grumble ; until, all at once, when I was least expecting it—tirala-tirala—it trilled out clearly, crisply, six silvery notes, and then relapsed into its rusty gr-r-r-r.

So it would go on and on until it ran down. A minute or two of creaking and croaking, hemming-and-hawing, as it were, whilst it cleared its old asthmatic throat, then a sudden silvery tirala-tirala, then a catch, a cough, and mutter-mutter-mutter. Or was it more like an old woman maundering in her sleep, who should suddenly quaver out a snatch from a ditty of her girlhood, and afterwards mumble incoherently again ?

I suppose the pin-points on the cylinder, all save just those six, were worn away ; or, possibly, those teeth of the steel comb were the only ones that retained elasticity enough to vibrate.

* * *

A sequence of six notes, as inconclusive as six words plucked at random from the middle of a sentence ; as void of musical value as six such words would be of literary value. I wonder why it has always had this instant, irresistible power to move me. It has always been a talisman in my hands, a thing to conjure with. As when I was a child, so now, after twenty years, I have but to breathe it to myself, and, if I will, the actual world melts away, and I am journeying in dreamland. Whether I will or not, it always stirs a sad, sweet emotion in my heart. I wonder why. Tirala-tirala—I dare say, for another, any six notes, struck at haphazard, would signify as much. But for me—ah, if I could seize the sentiment it has for me, and translate it into English words, I should have achieved a sort of miracle. For me, it is the voice of a spirit, sighing something unutterable. It is an elixir, distilled of

of unearthly things, six lucent drops; I drink them, and I am transported into another atmosphere, and I see visions. It is Aladdin's lamp; I touch it, and cloud-capped towers and gorgeous palaces are mine in the twinkling of an eye. It is my wishing-cap, my magic-carpet, my key to the Castle of Enchantment.

* * *

The Castle of Enchantment. . . . .

When I was a child the Castle of Enchantment meant—the Future; the great mysterious Future, away, away there, beneath the uttermost horizon, where the sky is luminous with tints of rose and pearl; the ineffable Future, when I should be grown-up, when I should be a Man, and when the world would be my garden, the world and life, and all their riches, mine to explore, to adventure in, to do as I pleased with! The Future and the World, the real World, the World that lay beyond our village, beyond the Forest of Granjolaye, farther than Bayonne, farther even than Pau; the World one read of and heard strange legends of: Paris, and Bagdad, and England, and Peru. Oh, how I longed to see it; how hard it was to wait; how desperately hard to think of the immense number of long years that must be worn through somehow, before it could come true.

But—tirala-tirala!—my little broken bar of music was a touch-stone. At the sound of it, at the thought of it, the Present was spirited away; Saint-Graal and all our countryside were left a thousand miles behind; and the Future and the World opened their portals to me, and I wandered in them where I would. In a sort of trance, with wide eyes and bated breath, I wandered in them, through enraptured hours. Believe me, it was a Future, it was a World, of quite unstinted magnificence. My many-pinnacled Castle of Enchantment was built of gold and silver, ivory, alabaster,

baster, and mother-of-pearl ; the fountains in its courts ran with perfumed waters ; and its pleasaunce was an orchard of pomegranates—one had no need to spare one's colours. I dare say, too, that it was rather vague, wrapped in a good deal of roseate haze, and of an architecture that could scarcely have been reduced to ground-plans and elevations ; but what of that ? And oh, the people, the people by whom the World and the Future were inhabited, the cavalcading knights, the beautiful princesses ! And their virtues, and their graces, and their talents ! There were no ugly people, of course, no stupid people, no disagreeable people ; everybody was young and handsome, gallant, generous, and splendidly dressed. And everybody was astonishingly nice to me, and it never seemed to occur to anybody that I wasn't to have my own way in everything. And I had it. Love and wealth, glory, and all manner of romance—I had them for the wishing. The stars left their courses to fight for me. And the winds of heaven vied with each other to prosper my galleons.

To be sure, it was nothing more nor other than the day-dream of every child. But it happened that that little accidental fragment of a phrase of music had a quite peculiar power to send me off dreaming it.

* * *

I suppose it must be that we pass the Castle of Enchantment while we are asleep. For surely, at first, it is before us—we are moving towards it ; we can see it shining in the distance ; we shall reach it to-morrow, next week, next year. And then—and then, one morning, we wake up, and lo ! it is behind us. We have passed it—we are sailing away from it—we can't turn back. We have passed the Castle of Enchantment ! And yet, it was only to reach it that we made our weary voyage, toiling through hardships and

and perils and discouragements, forcing our impatient hearts to wait; it was only the hope, the certain hope, of reaching it at last, that made our toiling and our waiting possible. And now—we have passed it. We are sailing away from it. We can't turn back. We can only *look* back—with the bitterness that every heart knows. If we look forward, what is there to see, save grey waters, and then a darkness that we fear to enter?

* * *

When I was a child, it was the great world and the future into which my talisman carried me, dreaming desirous dreams; the great world, all gold and marble, peopled by beautiful princesses and cavalcading knights; the future, when I should be grown-up, when I should be a Man.

Well, I am grown-up now, and I have seen something of the great world—something of its gold and marble, its cavalcading knights and beautiful princesses. But if I care to dream desirous dreams, I touch my talisman, and wish myself back in the little world of my childhood. Tirala-tirala—I breathe it softly, softly; and the sentiment of my childhood comes and fills my room like a fragrance. I am at Saint-Graal again; and my grandmother is seated at her window, knitting; and André is bringing up the milk from the farm; and my cousin Elodie is playing her exercises on the piano; and Hélène and I are walking in the garden—Hélène in her short white frock, with a red sash, and her black hair loose down her back. All round us grow innumerable flowers, and innumerable birds are singing in the air, and the frogs are croaking, croaking in our pond. And farther off, the sun shines tranquilly on the chestnut trees of the Forest of Granjolaye; and farther still, the Pyrenees gloom purple. . . . . It is not much, perhaps

perhaps it is not very wonderful ; but oh, how my heart yearns to recover it, how it aches to realise that it never can.

* * *

In the Morning (says Paraschkine) the Eastern Rim of the Earth was piled high with Emeralds and Rubies, as if the Gods had massed their Riches there ; but he—ingenuous Pilgrim—who set forth to reach this Treasure-hoard, and to make the Gods' Riches his, seemed presently to have lost his Way ; he could no longer discern the faintest Glint of the Gems that had tempted him : until, in the Afternoon, chancing to turn his Head, he saw a bewildering Sight—the Emeralds and Rubies were behind him, immeasurably far behind, piled up in the West.

Where is the Castle of Enchantment ? *When* do we pass it ? Ah, well, thank goodness, we all have talismans (like my little broken bit of a forgotten tune) whereby we are enabled sometimes to visit it in spirit, and to lose ourselves during enraptured moments among its glistening, labyrinthine halls.

The Golden Touch

By Rosamund Marriott Watson

THE amber dust of sunset fills
The limits of my narrow room,
And every sterile shadow thrills
To golden hope, to golden bloom.

Sweet through the splendour, shrill and sweet,
Somewhere a neighbouring cage-bird sings,
Sings of the Spring in this grey street
While golden glories gild his wings.

Clothed with the sun he breaks to song—
In vague remembrance, deep delight—
Of dim green worlds, forsaken long,
Of leaf-hung dawn and dewy night.

My prisoning bars, transfigured too,
Fade with the day, forsworn, forgot—
Melt in a golden mist—and you
Are here, although you know it not.

Long Odds

By Kenneth Grahame

FOR every honest reader there exist some half-dozen honest books, which he re-reads at regular intervals of six months or thereabouts. Whatever the demands on him, however alarming the arrears that gibber and grin in menacing row, for these he somehow generally manages to find time. Nay, as the years flit by, the day is only too apt to arrive when he reads no others at all; the hour will even come, in certain instances, when the number falls to five, to four—perhaps to three. With this same stride of time comes another practice too—that of formulating general principles to account for or excuse one's own line of action; and yet it ought not to be necessary to put forward preface or apology for finding oneself immersed in *Treasure Island* for about the twentieth time. The captain's capacities for the consumption of rum must always be a new delight and surprise; the approaching tap of the blind man's stick, the moment of breathless waiting in the dark and silent inn, are ever sure of their thrill; hence it came about that the other night I laid down the familiar book at the end of Part the Second—where vice and virtue spar a moment ere the close grip—with the natural if commonplace reflection that nineteen to six was good healthy odds.

But somehow I was in no hurry to take the book up again. The

The mental comment with which I had laid it down had set up a yeasty ferment and a bubble in my brain ; till at last, with a start, I asked myself how long was it since I had been satisfied with such a pitiful majority on the side of evil ? Why, a certain number of years ago it would have been no majority at all—none, at least, worth speaking of. What a change must have been taking place in me unsuspected all this time, that I could tamely accept, as I had just done, this pitiful compromise (I can call it nothing else) with the base law of probabilities ! What a totally different person I must have now become, from the hero who sallied out to deal with a horde of painted Indians, armed only with his virtue and his unerring smoothbore ! Well, there was some little comfort in the fact that the fault was not entirely my own, nor even that of the irresistible years.

Frankly, in the days I look back to, this same *Treasure Island* would not have gone down at all. It was not that we were in the least exacting. We did not ask for style ; the evolution of character possessed no interest whatever for us ; and all scenery and description we sternly skipped. One thing we *did* insist on having, and that was good long odds against the hero ; and in those fortunate days we generally got them. Just at present, however, a sort of moral cowardice seems to have set in among writers of this noblest class of fiction ; a truckling to likelihood, and a dirty regard for statistics. Needless to say, this state of things is bringing about its inevitable consequence. Already one hears rumours that the boy of the period, instead of cutting down impalpable bandits or blowing up imaginary mines and magazines, is moodily devoting himself to golf. The picture is a pitiful one. Heaven hath blessed him, this urchin, with a healthy appetite for pirates, a neat hand at the tomahawk, and a simple passion for being marooned ; instead of which, he now plods about the country playing

playing golf. The fault is not his, of course ; the honest heart of him beats sound as ever. The real culprits are these defaulting writers, who, tainted by realism, basely shirk their duty, fall away from the high standard of former days, and endeavour to represent things as they possibly might have happened. Nineteen to six, indeed ! No lad of spirit will put up with this sort of thing. He will even rather play golf ; and play golf he consequently does.

The magnificent demand of youth for odds—long odds, whatever the cost !—has a pathetic side to it, once one is in a position to look back, thereon squinting gloomily through the wrong end of the telescope. At the age of six or seven, the boy (in the person of his hero of the hour) can take on a Genie, an Afreet or two, a few Sultans and a couple of hostile armies, with a calmness resembling indifference. At twelve he is already less exacting. Three hundred naked Redskins, mounted on mustangs and yelling like devils, pursue him across the prairie and completely satisfy his more modest wants. At fifteen, 'tis enough if he may only lay his frigate alongside of two French ships of the line ; and among the swords he shall subsequently receive on his quarter-deck he will not look for more than one Admiral's ; while a year or two later it suffices if he can but win fame and fortune at twenty-five, and marry the Earl's daughter in the face of a whole competitive House of Lords. Henceforward all is declension. One really has not the heart to follow him, step by dreary step, to the time when he realises that a hero may think himself lucky if he can only hold his own, and so on to the point when it dawns on him at last that the gods have a nasty habit of turning the trump, and have even been accused of playing with loaded dice—an aphorism any honest boy would laugh to scorn.

Indeed, the boy may well be excused for rejecting with indignation these unworthy sneers at the *bona fides* of the autocrats who, from

from afar, shift the pieces on this little board, and chuck them aside when done with, one by one. For he but sees the world without through the chequered lattice of the printed page, and there invariably the hero, buffeted though he may be of men, kicked by parents and guardians, reviled by colonels and first lieutenants, always has the trump card up his sleeve, ready for production in the penultimate chapter. What wonder, then, that the gods appear to him as his cheerful backers, ready to put their money on him whatever the starting price? Nay, even willing to wink and look the other way when he, their darling, gets a quiet lift from one of themselves, who (perhaps) may "have a bit on?" Meanwhile, to the wistful gazer through the lattice, his cloistral life begins to irk terribly. 'Tis full time he was up and doing. Through the garden gate, beyond the parish common, somewhere over the encircling horizon, lie fame and fortune, and the title and the bride. Pacific seas are calling, the thunder of their rollers seems to thrill to him through the solid globe that interposes between. Savages are growing to dusky manhood solely that he may flesh his sword on them; maidens are already entangling themselves in perilous situations that he, and he alone, may burst the bonds, eliminate the dragon, and swing them forth to freedom and his side. The scarlet sunsets scorn him, a laggard and a recreant; behind them lie arrogant cities, plains of peril, and all the tingling adventure of the sea. The very nights are big with reproach, in their tame freedom from the watch-fire, the war-whoop, the stealthy ambuscade; and every hedgerow is a boundary, every fence another bond. From this point his decadence dates. At first the dice spring merrily out on the board. The gods throw, and he; and they again, and then he, and still with no misgivings; those blacklegs know enough to permit an occasional win. All the same, early or late, comes that period in the game when

when suspicion grows a sickening certainty. He asked for long odds against him, and he has got them with a vengeance; the odds of the loaded dice. While as for that curled darling he dreamed of, who was to sweep the board and declare himself the chosen, where is he? He has dropped by the roadside, many a mile behind. From henceforth on they must not look to join hands again.

Some there are who have the rare courage, at the realising point, to kick the board over and declare against further play. Stout-hearted ones they, worthy of marble and brass; but you meet them not at every turn of the way. Such a man I forgathered with by accident, one late autumn, on the almost deserted Lido. The bathing-ladders were drawn up, the tramway was under repair; but the slant sun was still hot on the crinkled sand, and it was not so much a case of paddling suggesting itself as of finding oneself barefoot and paddling without any conscious process of thought. So I paddled along dreamily, and thought of Ulysses, and how he might have run the prow of his galley up on these very sands, and sprung ashore and paddled; and then it was that I met him—not Ulysses, but the instance in point.

He was barelegged also, this elderly man of sixty or thereabouts; and he had just found a *cavallo del mare*, and exhibited it with all the delight of a boy; and as we wandered together, cool-footed, eastwards, I learnt by degrees how such a man as this, with the mark of Cheapside still evident on him, came to be pacing the sands of the Lido that evening with me. He had been Secretary, it transpired, to some venerable Company or Corporation that dated from Henry the Seventh; and among his duties, which were various and engrossing, was in especial that of ticking off, with a blue pencil, the members of his governing body, as they made their appearance at their weekly meeting; in accordance with the practice dating

dating from Henry the Seventh. His week, as I have said, was a busy one, and hinged on a Board day ; and as time went on these Board days raced up and disappeared with an ever-increasing rapidity, till at last his life seemed to consist of but fifty-two days in the year—all Board days. And eternally he seemed to be ticking off names with a feverish blue pencil. These names, too, that he ticked—they flashed into sight and vanished with the same nightmare gallop ; the whole business was a great humming Zoetrope. Anon the Board would consist of Smith, Brown, Jackson, &c., Life Members all ; in the briefest of spaces Smith would drop out, and on would come Price, a neophyte—a mere youngling, this Price. A few more Board days flash by, and out would go Brown and maybe Jackson—on would come Cattermole, Fraser, Davidson—beardless juniors every one. Round spun the unceasing wheel ; in a twinkling Davidson, the fledgling, sat reverend in the chair, while as for those others—— ! And all the time his blue pencil, with him, its slave, fastened to one end of it, ticked steadily on. To me, the hearer, it was evident that he must have been gradually getting into the same state of mind as Rudyard Kipling's delightful lighthouse keeper, whom solitude and the ceaseless tides caused to see streaks and lines in all things, till at last he barred a waterway of the world against the ships that persisted in making the water streaky. And this may account for an experience of his in the Underground Railway one evening, when he was travelling home after a painful Board day on which he had ticked up three new boys into vacant places which seemed to have been hardly filled an hour. He was alone, he said, and rather sleepy, and he hardly looked at the stranger who got in at one of the stations, until he saw him deposit in the hat-rack—where ordinary people put their umbrellas —what might have been an umbrella, but looked, in the dim light of the Underground, far more like a scythe. Then he sat up and began

began to take notice. The elderly stranger—for he was both gaunt and elderly—nay, as he looked at him longer he saw he was old—oh so very old ! And one long white tuft of hair hung down on his wrinkled forehead from under his top hat,—the stranger squatted on the seat opposite him, produced a note-book and a pencil—a *blue* pencil too!—and leaning forward, with a fiendish grin, said, " *Now* I'm going to tick off all you fellows—all you Secretaries—right back from the days of Henry the Seventh ! "

The Secretary fell back helplessly in his seat. Terror-stricken, he strove to close his ears against the raucous voice that was already rattling off those quaint old Tudor names he remembered having read on yellowing parchment; but all was of no avail. The stranger went steadily on, and each name as read was ruthlessly scored out by the unerring blue pencil. The pace was tremendous. Already they were in the Commonwealth ; past flew the Restoration like a racehorse—the blue pencil wagged steadily like a nightmare—Queen Anne and her coffee-houses,—in a second they were left far behind ; and as they turned the corner and sped down the straight of the Georgian era, the Secretary sweated, a doomed man. The gracious reign of Victoria was full in sight—nay, on the stranger's lips was hovering the very name of Fladgate—Fladgate whom the Secretary could himself just remember, a doddering old pensioner—when the train shivered and squealed into St. James's Park Station. The Secretary flung the door open and fled like a hare, though it was not his right station. He ran as far as the Park itself, and there on the bridge over the water he halted, mopped his brow, and gradually recovered his peace of mind. The evening was pleasant, full of light and laughter and the sound of distant barrel-organs. Before him, calm and cool, rose the walls of the India Office, which in his simple way he had always considered a dream in stone. Beneath his feet a whole family of ducks circled

circled aimlessly, with content written on every feature; or else, reversing themselves in a position denoting supreme contempt for all humanity above the surface, explored a new cool underworld a few inches below. It was then (he said) that a true sense of his situation began to steal over him; and it was then that he awoke to the fact of another life open to him should he choose to grasp it. Neither the ducks nor the India Office (so he affirmed) carried blue pencils, and why should he? The very next Board day he sent in his resignation, and, with a comfortable pension and some reminiscence (perhaps) of that frontage of the India Office, crossed the Channel and worked South till he came to Venice, where the last trace of blue-pencil nightmare finally faded away.

"And are you never bored?" I tenderly inquired of him, as we rocked homewards in a gondola between an apricot sky and an apricot sea.

"During the first six months I was," he answered, frankly; "then it passed away altogether, even as influenza does in time, or the memory of a *gaucherie*. And now every day lasts as long as a year of those Board days of old, and is fifty-two times as interesting. Why, only take this afternoon, for example. I didn't get over here till two, but first I met some newly-arrived Americans, and talked for a cycle with them; and you never know what an American will be surprised at, or, better still, what he will not be surprised at; and if you only think what that means—— Well, presently they left (they had to get on to Rome), so I went up to the platform over the sea and had oysters and a bottle of that delightful yellow wine I always forget the name of; and æons passed away in the consumption. Each oyster lasted a whole Board day, and each glass of yellow wine three. Then I strolled along the sands for a century or so, thinking of nothing in particular. Lastly, I met you, and for some twelve months I've been boring you

you with my uninteresting story. And even yet there's the whole evening to come! Oh, I had lots of leeway to make up when I came over here; but I think I shall manage it yet—in Venice!"

I could not help thinking, as I parted from him at the Piazzetta steps, that (despite a certain incident in the Underground Railway) here was one of the sanest creatures I had ever yet happened upon.

But examples such as this (as I said) are rare; the happy-starred ones who know when to cut their losses. The most of us prefer to fight on—mainly, perhaps, from cowardice, and the dread of a plunge into a new element, new conditions, new surroundings—a fiery trial for any humble, mistrustful creature of use-and-wont. And yet it is not all merely a matter of funk. For a grim love grows up for the sword-play itself, for the push and the hurtle of battle, for the grips and the give-and-take—in fine, for the fight itself, whatever the cause. In this exaltation, far from ignoble, we push and worry along until a certain day of a mist and a choke, and we are ticked off and done with.

This is the better way; and the history of our race is ready to justify us. With the tooth-and-claw business we began, and we mastered it thoroughly ere we learnt any other trade. Since that time we may have achieved a thing or two besides—evolved an art, even, here and there, though the most of us bungled it. But from first to last fighting was the art we were always handiest at; and we are generally safe if we stick to it, whatever the foe, whatever the weapons—most of all, whatever the cause.

Two Drawings

By Patten Wilson

I. A Penelope

II. Sohrab taking Leave of his Mother




PATTEN
WILSON.
95

A Letter Home

By Enoch Arnold Bennett

I

RAIN was falling—it had fallen steadily through the night—but the sky showed promise of fairer weather. As the first streaks of dawn appeared, the wind died away, and the young leaves on the trees were almost silent. The birds were insistently clamorous, vociferating times without number that it was a healthy spring morning and good to be alive.

A little, bedraggled crowd stood before the park gates, awaiting the hour named on the notice board when they would be admitted to such lodging and shelter as iron seats and overspreading branches might afford. A weary, patient-eyed, dogged crowd—a dozen men, a boy of thirteen, and a couple of women, both past middle age—which had been gathering slowly since five o'clock. The boy appeared to be the least uncomfortable. His feet were bare, but he had slept well in an area in Grosvenor Place, and was not very damp yet. The women had nodded on many doorsteps, and were soaked. They stood apart from the men, who seemed unconscious of their existence. The men were exactly such as one would have expected to find there—beery and restless as to the eyes, quaintly shod, and with nondescript greenish clothes which for

for the most part bore traces of the yoke of the sandwich board. Only one amongst them was different.

He was young, and his cap, and manner of wearing it, gave sign of the sea. His face showed the rough outlines of his history. Yet it was a transparently honest face, very pale, but still boyish and fresh enough to make one wonder by what rapid descent he had reached his present level. Perhaps the receding chin, the heavy, pouting lower lip, and the ceaselessly twitching mouth offered a key to the problem.

"Say, Darkey," he said.

"Well?"

"How much longer?"

"Can't ye see the clock? It's staring ye in the face."

"No. Something queer's come over my eyes."

Darky was a short, sturdy man, who kept his head down and his hands deep in his pockets. The rain-drops clinging to the rim of an ancient hat fell every now and then into his grey beard, which presented a drowned appearance. He was a person of long and varied experiences; he knew that queer feeling in the eyes, and his heart softened.

"Come, lean against the pillar," he said, "if you don't want to tumble. Three of brandy's what you want. There's four minutes to wait yet."

With body flattened to the masonry, legs apart, and head thrown back, Darkey's companion felt more secure, and his mercurial spirits began to revive. He took off his cap, and brushing back his light brown curly hair with the hand which held it, he looked down at Darkey through half-closed eyes, the play of his features divided between a smile and a yawn. He had a lively sense of humour, and the irony of his situation was not lost on him. He took a grim, ferocious delight in calling up the might-have-beens

might-have-beens and the "fatuous ineffectual yesterdays" of life. There is a certain sardonic satisfaction to be gleaned from a frank recognition of the fact that you are the architect of your own misfortune. He felt that satisfaction, and laughed at Darkey, who was one of those who bleat about "ill-luck" and "victims of circumstance."

"No doubt," he would say, "you're a very deserving fellow, Darkey, who's been treated badly. I'm not." To have attained such wisdom at twenty-five is not to have lived altogether in vain.

A park-keeper presently arrived to unlock the gates, and the band of outcasts straggled indolently towards the nearest sheltered seats. Some went to sleep at once, in a sitting posture. Darkey produced a clay pipe, and, charging it with a few shreds of tobacco laboriously gathered from his waistcoat pocket, began to smoke. He was accustomed to this sort of thing, and with a pipe in his mouth could contrive to be moderately philosophical upon occasion. He looked curiously at his companion, who lay stretched at full length on another bench.

"I say, pal," he remarked, "I've known ye two days; ye've never told me yer name, and I don't ask ye to. But I see ye've not slep' in a park before."

"You hit it, Darkey; but how?"

"Well, if the keeper catches ye lying down he'll be on to ye. Lying down's not allowed."

The man raised himself on his elbow.

"Really now," he said, "that's interesting. But I think I'll give the keeper the opportunity of moving me. Why, it's quite fine, the sun's coming out and the sparrows are hopping round—cheeky little devils! I'm not sure that I don't feel jolly."

"I wish I'd got the price of a pint about me," sighed Darkey, and

and the other man dropped his head and appeared to sleep. Then Darkey dozed a little and heard in his waking sleep the heavy, crunching tread of an approaching park-keeper; he started up to warn his companion, but thought better of it, and closed his eyes again.

"Now then, there," the park-keeper shouted to the man with the sailor hat, "get up! This ain't a fourpenny doss, you know. No lying down." A rough shake accompanied the words, and the man sat up.

"All right, my friend." The keeper, who was a good-humoured man, passed on without further objurgation.

The face of the younger man had grown whiter.

"Look here, Darkey," he said, "I believe I'm done for."

"Never say die."

"No, just die without speaking." His head fell forward and his eyes closed.

"At any rate, this is better than some deaths I've seen," he began again with a strange accession of liveliness. "Darkey, did I tell you the story of the five Japanese girls?"

"What, in Suez Bay?" said Darkey, who had heard many sea stories during the last two days, and recollected them but hazily.

"No, man. This was at Nagasaki. We were taking in a cargo of coal for Hong Kong. Hundreds of little Jap girls pass the coal from hand to hand over the ship's side in tiny baskets that hold about a plateful. In that way you can get 3000 tons aboard in two days."

"Talking of platefuls reminds me of sausage and mash," said Darkey.

"Don't interrupt. Well, five of these gay little dolls wanted to go to Hong Kong, and they arranged with the Chinese sailors to stow away; I believe their friends paid those cold-blooded fiends

fiends something to pass them down food on the voyage and give them an airing at nights. We had a particularly lively trip, battened everything down tight, and scarcely uncovered till we got into port. Then I and another man found those five girls among the coal."

"Dead, eh?"

"They'd simply torn themselves to pieces. Their bits of frock things were in strips, and they were scratched deep from top to toe. The Chinese had never troubled their heads about them at all, although they must have known it meant death. You may bet there was a row. The Japanese authorities make you search ship before sailing, now."

"Well?"

"Well, I sha'n't die like that. That's all."

He stretched himself out once more, and for ten minutes neither spoke. The park-keeper strolled up again.

"Get up, there!" he said shortly and gruffly.

"Up ye get, mate," added Darkey, but the man on the bench did not stir. One look at his face sufficed to startle the keeper, and presently two policemen were wheeling an ambulance cart to the hospital. Darkey followed, gave such information as he could, and then went his own ways.

II

In the afternoon the patient regained full consciousness. His eyes wandered vacantly about the illimitable ward, with its rows of beds stretching away on either side of him. A woman with a white cap, a white apron, and white wristbands bent over him, and he felt something gratefully warm passing down his throat.

For just one second he was happy. Then his memory returned, and the nurse saw that he was crying. When he caught the nurse's eye he ceased, and looked steadily at the distant ceiling.

"You're better?"

"Yes." He tried to speak boldly, decisively, nonchalantly. He was filled with a sense of physical shame, the shame which bodily helplessness always experiences in the presence of arrogant, patronising health. He would have got up and walked briskly away if he could. He hated to be waited on, to be humoured, to be examined and theorised about. This woman would be wanting to feel his pulse. She should not; he would turn cantankerous. No doubt they had been saying to each other, "And so young, too! How sad!" Confound them.

"Have you any friends that you would like to send for?"

"No, none."

The girl (she was only a girl) looked at him, and there was that in her eye which overcame him.

"None at all?"

"Not that I want to see."

"Are your parents alive?"

"My mother is, but she lives away in the North."

"You've not seen her lately, perhaps?"

He did not reply, and the nurse spoke again, but her voice sounded indistinct and far off.

When he awoke it was night. At the other end of the ward was a long table covered with a white cloth, and on this table a lamp.

In the ring of light under the lamp was an open book, an inkstand and a pen. A nurse (not *his* nurse) was standing by the table, her fingers idly drumming the cloth, and near her a man in evening dress. Perhaps a doctor. They were conversing in low tones.

tones. In the middle of the ward was an open stove, and the restless flames were reflected in all the brass knobs of the bedsteads and in some shining metal balls which hung from an unlighted chandelier. His part of the ward was almost in darkness. A confused, subdued murmur of little coughs, breathings, rustlings, was continually audible, and sometimes it rose above the conversation at the table. He noticed all these things. He became conscious, too, of a strangely familiar smell. What was it? Ah, yes! Acetic acid—his mother used it for her rheumatics.

Suddenly, magically, a great longing came over him. He must see his mother, or his brothers, or his little sister—some one who knew him, same one who *belonged* to him. He could have cried out in his desire. This one thought consumed all his faculties. If his mother could but walk in just now through that doorway! If only old Spot, even, could amble up to him, tongue out and tail furiously wagging! He tried to sit up, and he could not move! Then despair settled on him, and weighed him down. He closed his eyes.

The doctor and the nurse came slowly up the ward, pausing here and there. They stopped before his bed, and he held his breath.

"Not roused up again, I suppose?"

"No."

"Hm! He may flicker on for forty-eight hours. Not more."

They went on, and with a sigh of relief he opened his eyes again. The doctor shook hands with the nurse, who returned to the table and sat down.

Death! The end of all this! Yes, it was coming. He felt it. His had been one of those wasted lives of which he used to read in books. How strange! Almost amusing! He was one of those sons who bring sorrow and shame into a family. Again, how

how strange! What a coincidence that he, just *he* and not the man in the next bed, should be one of those rare, legendary good-for-nothings who go recklessly to ruin. And yet, he was sure that he was not such a bad fellow after all. Only somehow he had been careless. Yes, careless, that was the word . . . . nothing worse. . . . . As to death, he was indifferent. Remembering his father's death, he reflected that it was probably less disturbing to die oneself than to watch another pass.

He smelt the acetic acid once more, and his thoughts reverted to his mother. Poor mother! No, great mother! The grandeur of her life's struggle filled him with a sense of awe. Strange that until that moment he had never seen the heroic side of her humdrum, commonplace existence! He must write to her, now, at once, before it was too late. His letter would trouble her, add another wrinkle to her face, but he must write; she must know that he had been thinking of her.

"Nurse," he cried out, in a thin, weak voice.

"Ssh!" She was by his side directly, but not before he had lost consciousness again.

The following morning he managed with infinite labour to scrawl a few lines:

"DEAR MAMMA,

"You will be surprised but not glad to get this letter. I'm done for, and you will never see me again. I'm sorry for what I've done, and how I've treated you, but it's no use saying anything now. If Pater had only lived he might have kept me in order. But you were too kind, you know. You've had a hard struggle these last six years, and I hope Arthur and Dick

Dick will stand by you better than I did, now they are growing up. Give them my love, and kiss little Fannie for me.

"WILLIE."

"Mrs. Hancock——"

He got no further with the address.

III

By some strange turn of the wheel, Darkey gathered several shillings during the next day or two, and feeling both elated and benevolent, he called one afternoon at the hospital, "just to inquire like." They told him the man was dead.

"By the way, he left a letter without an address. Mrs. Hancock—here it is."

"That'll be his mother; he did tell me about her—lived at Endon, Staffordshire, he said. I'll see to it."

They gave Darkey the letter.

"So his name's Hancock," he soliloquised, when he got into the street. "I knew a girl of that name—once. I'll go and have a pint of four half."

At nine o'clock that night Darkey was still consuming four half, and relating certain adventures by sea which, he averred, had happened to himself. He was very drunk.

"Yes," he said, "and them five lil' gals was lying there without a stitch on 'em, dead as meat; 's'true as I'm 'ere. I've seen a thing or two in my time, I can tell ye."

"Talking about these Anarchists——" said a man who appeared anxious to change the subject.

"An—kists," Darkey interrupted. "I tell ye what I'd do with

with that muck." He stopped to light his pipe, looked in vain for a match, felt in his pockets, and pulled out a piece of paper—the letter.

"I tell you what I'd do. I'd——" He slowly and meditatively tore the letter in two, dropped one piece on the floor, thrust the other into a convenient gas jet, and applied it to the tobacco.

"I'd get 'em 'gether in a heap and I'd—— Damn this pipe." He picked up the other half of the letter, and relighted the pipe.

"After you, mate," said a man sitting near, who was just biting the end from a cigar.

The Captain's Book

By George Egerton

LET it be understood at the outset that this book was even more fateful to its author than the forgotten pamphlet of one John Stubbs, Puritan, whose right hand, with that of his publisher, was chopped off in the reign of the great Queen, yclept virgin, "wich is writ sarkastic."

The Captain, by courtesy, for he had never really attained to more than lieutenant's rank, and that, too, was due to a page in the book blurred by a woman's tears and a comrade's handgrip. It is not within my ken to say how the book was begotten, but I can vouch for the fact that it proved ever a barrier to the success of its author as a worth-while member of a tax-paying community.

It was with him as a laddie when he fished for troutlings in the mill-stream, or went birds'-nesting in the hedgerows. It floated as a nebulous magnetic spirit to lure him from set tasks in the dame school of his tender years, to play truant in pleasant meadows, with a stolen volume of forbidden lore in his satchel. It transformed every itinerant ballad-monger into a troubadour. It made the wooden-legged corporal who mended brogues between his drunken bouts, and told tales of the Peninsular and Waterloo, more wonderful than Prester John, and his feats greater than those of any hero of Northern Saga. It gave him, to the despair of tutor and parents,

parents, a leaning to the disreputable society of such members of gipsydom or the mummers' craft as paid flying visits with van or show to the town of his birth.

Was it begotten by the reading of his first romance, this desire that grew in him to write some day a great book, a book of which the world would ring, that would stir men's hearts to deeds of valour, and women's to vows of loyal love? Did it sleep in a cell of his brain at his birth, fateful inheritance of some roving ancestor, with a light touch on the harp and a genius of lying on his tongue?

When the dame school was abandoned for college, and the velvet cap with golden tassel and jean pantalettes with broidered frills ceded to cloth small clothes with gilt button and college cap, it still grew apace; and when it crept between his dryer tasks and let duller boys snatch prizes from his grasp, he whispered to himself that some day he would let them know why he had failed to be an easy first.

Years fled, the choice of a career became imperative; but ever the golden book with its purple letters on fairest vellum, its clasps of jacinth and opal, its pageant of knights, ladies, courtiers and clowns; martial strains and dim cathedral choirs with mystic calls; its songs of the blood, leering satyrs, and the seven deadly sins in guise of maidens fair; whispered distractingly to his inner ear. Indecision blinked at him with restless eyes and whispered many callings: Art held up a pencil and said: You who can limn each passing face, who are affectable to every shade of colour, can quicken the inanimate world by the light of your fancy, if you follow me. I am an arbitrary mistress, but in the end I will lead you through the gate of the Temple of Fame! And he was about to follow, when the skirl of pipes and the echo of marching feet, the flutter of pennants and strains of a music that roused to imperative life the

the instincts of the fighting man, lulled to slumber by centuries of peace, made him pause again. Visions of foreign lands, gallant deeds for country and for fame, adventures by sea and shore that would serve for the pages of the marvellous book, decided him to abandon his true mistress and follow the jade of war.

It became so closely interwoven with the fibres of his being that often it was hard to distinguish the existing from the imagined, and every fact of life borrowed a colour from its inscribing therein; thus it came to pass, not seldom, that men listening to his narration of the happened by the light of their soberer reason, looked askance at his version and whispered to each other: "He is a liar"; and when the pain of their misunderstanding had ceased to sting he told himself: "They too will understand when they read the book."

One career after the other was tossed aside at the turn to success, and those who had watched the opening days of the brilliant lad with the many gifts, turned their faces away when they met him, for they could not afford to know a wastrel of the chances of life.

Yet the Captain was rarely unhappy, for he alone conned the pages of the magic book, ever present to him, a growing marvel, in manhood as in childhood. When the girl of his early love, weary of waiting for the home that was to harbour her, distrustful of promises as lightly made as broken, turned from a world of vanities and unsatisfied yearnings to take the veil as a Sister of Mercy, it was a keen wound, soon to be treasured as a melancholy sweet episode in the romance of the book. So years sped by. The Captain married, and little children came with reckless frequency, episodes of gay insouciance; materials of sorrow and pain, dark blots, with here and there a touch of shame accumulated to supply its tragedy and its truth.

Former schoolfellows, plodding boys of sparser talents who had kept

kept a grip on the tool they had chosen, passed him in the race of life, and drove by his shabby lodgings in neat broughams, and forgot to greet him when they met.

What knew they of the witchery of the golden book, the hashish of its whisperings, the incidents crowding to fill it with all the experiences of humanity—a concordance of the soul of man? They merely looked upon him as belonging to the strange race of the sons of men who never work in the immediate present, but who lie in bed in the morning forming elaborate plans to catch a sea-serpent.

Debts increased, little children clamoured for food and raiment; yet the Captain, ever dreaming of his book, trod lightly and whistled through life, mellow in note as a blackbird; tired women stitching in narrow windows would lift their heads as they heard him pass, and think wistfully of bird song and hazel copse down country ways. Even when the wife of his choice, patient victim of his procrastinations, closed her tired eyes from sheer weariness, glad to be relieved of the burden of her sorrows, the Captain found solace in weaving her in as the central figure of his book—an apotheosis of heroic wifehood.

But the reaping must be as the sowing, and evil days must come with the ingathering: his clothes grew shabbier, his friends fewer, want rapped oftener at the door, gay romance gave place to sordid reality, and the sore places of life blotted the pages, as the plates in a book of surgery; dire necessity forced the Captain to woo the mistress he had jilted in early youth, but she laughed illusively. The old spirit had flown from the pencil, his fingers had lost their cunning, and younger men elbowed him out of the way; for a man who has spent his life in dreaming ever fails to grasp the "modern," the changeful spirit of the day. As time went on the book became a subject of jest to his children, of good-natured raillery

raillery to his friends; the boys and girls fought their separate ways, gathering educational manna from every bush; and became practical hard-headed men and women of the world, with a keen eye to the main chance, a grip of the essentials of life, as befits the offspring of a dreamer.

Something of scorn for his failures, of contempt for his ideals, impatience with his shiftlessness, tinged their attitude to him always, and, spreading wider, their attitude towards every one who bore not the hall-mark of the world's estimate of success. What is the good of it, how much will it bring? was their standard of worth.

Barney who had become a successful stockbroker, occasionally found the former acquaintanceship of the old guv'nor with sundry families of nob'e breeding of signal service to him. He never failed to make capital of the "old Dad's" intimate knowledge of salmon-fishing, or the best places to go in search of big game and the easiest way to get there. "A fellow whose father is a crack shot and an authority on salmon-fishing can't be quite a cad, don't you know!" young De Vere would urge when asking his governor to send City Barney an invitation.

Barney, in return, paid for the Captain's cheap lodgings, and gave him a hint that the "missus" only cared to see people on invitation, as the chicks asked awkward questions before her folk as to why grandpa lived in such a little house? It didn't do! The Captain would curl his grey moustache fiercely and turn to his pipe and book, and lay the one as it burnt out as a marker in the half-read page of the other, and close his eyes with a vehemence of intention that boded ill for the performance, to map out the chapters of the wonderful book.

Dick, who had inherited his facile invention, astounding memory, and his adaptive mercurial temperament, without any of his tenderness of heart, had taken successfully to journalism as a stepping-stone

stone to whatever might offer ; and when the *Piccadilly Budget* treated all the clubs to a merry half-hour by its piquant details of the early life of the latest created military baronet, or told how the great porter brewer's grandfather burnt the malt by accident and so laid the foundation to his fortune, or gave a most piquant version of an old scandal with modern touches as applicable to the newest woman writer, brother journalists were green with envy. Readers in the running said : "That's Dick O'Grady's par.," and wondered where the deuce the fellow picked up his facts. And Dick smiled at acquaintances with the winning smile that too was an inheritance from the Captain, and stopped his hansom to greet a club gossip useful to push him into the set he wished to enter, told him a rattling good story of the latest "star's" mother, whom he happened to know was a canteen woman in the Curragh in 1856, and was promised a card in return for Lady C.'s crush ; sometimes, too, he found a modernised version of the Captain's chivalrous manner to women of almost miraculous effect in conciliating the esoteric petticoat influence of some leading daily ; and, conscious of his debt, he would order a new dress suit and send the old boy half a sovereign with a letter bemoaning the shortness of "oof," and asking three questions no one else in London could answer him. His Sunday afternoon with the Captain was always profitably spent ; he gleaned stores of workable anecdotes, and if the stories he deftly drew out gained in malice as they lost in genial humanity, and the rennet of his cynicism turned sour the milk of human kindness that ran through the Captain's worst tale—well, he was the better latter-day journalist for that. Nowise deceived, the old man would pocket the stray shillings, and wash the taste of the interview down with a glass of his favourite Jamieson, swearing he would make that cub, with the mind of a journalising huckster, cry small when he published his book.

As

As the sons, so the daughters.

Mary, who married well and lived in Lancaster Gate, sometimes took the children in a cab to see him ; but as her nurse's sister let apartments in the same terrace, she had to look after them herself, and that was too fatiguing for frequent repetition. Kitty, the black sheep of the family, who danced in burlesque, and showed her pretty limbs as Captain of the Guard, and her pretty teeth in her laughing song, stood to him best ; but even she was frankly sceptical at mention of the golden book : "Chuck it, dad, and write naughty anecdotes of celebrities for *Modern Society* or some of the papers ; nothing pays like scandal with just a grain of truth. Like some tickets for Thursday ? No ! Well, buy some baccy." And she would take her rustling petticoats and powdered, laughing face, and saucy eyes, into a hansom with ill-concealed relief.

They had all grown beyond him and his dreams. Their interests were frankly material ; they were keenly alive to his faults, his subterfuges, his poor, sometimes mean, shifts to make ends meet ; his silly reverence for everything that wore a gown, his wasted talents that might have served their advancement ; they resented him as a failure, and they let him know it.

One thing solely they were blind to, Dick as well as Barney (which was the less excusable, seeing how like the chip was to the block), level-headed Mary as easy-going Kitty—that they themselves were the result of the very faults they condemned. Their acute sense of essentials, their world-insight, their calculating forethought, each of the very qualities that assured their success in the world of their desires was built up on the solid foundation of sordid experience his make-shift life had brought in its wake. His impecuniosity had taught them the value of money, his happy-go-lucky procrastination the need of immediate action ; he had been an unconscious object lesson to them from their tenderest

tenderest years, of the things to avoid unless a man wish to fail in life.

The Captain saw it clearly enough, and sometimes a tiny flame of his old spirit would flicker to life, and he would register a vow to begin the next day—perhaps he would make ready a couple of quills, dust his old desk, lay out some foolscap, and put away treasured letters from old comrades—his correspondence of late was infrequent—and whisper with a smile: "To-morrow!" He would cock his old hat jauntily and nod to Jeanet, his landlady's little daughter, and go on to the common with a paper and a pipe, and lose himself in a happy dream of a glorious first chapter; a marvel of psychological insight into the life of a child, in which youth and love, and the tender colours of hope and faith, would make young readers' eyes glow and old readers' eyes glisten. Later on, Jeanet, coming to seek him, would find him asleep with his chin on his stick. She was a wise little maid, with the worldliness that is such a pitiful side of London childhood, clever and practical, with a strange affection for the old gentleman who treated her so courteously and called her "My pretty Jane," and was a mine of wonderful lore. She was fiercely jealous of his stuck-up sons and daughters, and resented their treatment with the keen intuition and loyal devotion of childhood.

"Wake up, Captain; you shouldn't go to sleep like that!" with quaint reproof. "Supper is ready, and I've got a new book!"

"Have you, my pretty? I, too, was dreaming of my book, and to-morrow I must begin. 'I am growing old, Jeanette.' Lord, how divinely poor Paddy Blake used to sing that song. Yes, it's time to begin!"—with a sigh.

The child, a lanky, precocious thing of thirteen winters, in whom he alone had seen a promise of beauty, and whose rare intelligence

intelligence he had striven to cultivate, was silent. Is it not of this book, his book, of which he has told her so often in the long evenings when they have sat together, when the mother has gone with Susie to a south-west music hall, that she has been thinking? Has she not learnt by heart the story of the youth and man, the lady—so wondrous a white lady surely never lived in fiction before—of the gentle nun tending wounded men in the wake of war and pestilence, of gallant "sojer" friends, witch-women with amber locks, little children buried at sea, and racy tales, expurgated for her hearing, of camp and bar? Is she not the only one who ever believed implicitly in its greatness and fulfilment? No wonder a plan grew in her little head, and now she has almost carried it to completion. She hurried the old man in, only to note with dismay how feeble his steps, how laboured his breathing had become; and from that day she redoubled her watchfulness of his needs.

Some days later, Dick, sauntering up the Strand from one of his numerous paper offices, was waylaid by an odd little maid with resentful eyes, who gave him a piece of her mind with the uncompromising bluntness of youth. She was too in earnest for him to resent it; besides, she interested him; he had been seeking a type of child-girl for a curtain-raiser, and she hit it off to the life. He watched each expressive gesture, each trick of emphasis and quaintness of idiom, noting them mentally for use; he talked of himself to draw her out.

"Don't you tell me you got to work 'ard"—in spite of the Captain's pains she lapses into her old ways of speech when strongly moved—"you go about in 'ansoms and wear expensive flowers in your button 'ole, an' the Captain 'e wants strengthenin' things 'e don't 'ave. I thought I'd tell you, if I was to be killed for it."

And Dick smiled and promised to send a cheque next day, honour

honour bright!—in reply to her distrustful look, adding: "You'll write and tell me how he is!"

Jeanet waved her hand from the top of her 'bus, and Dick bared his head as to a duchess, and invented a lie on the spur of the moment in reply to the enthusiastic query of an artist friend who had seen the parting: "Who's the girl with the singular face?" Dick's lies were always entertaining, and he never made the mistake of lying about things that might be found out.

The cheque arrived, the Captain's spirits rose with his renewed health, and Jeanet came into his room one evening with an air of triumph. Her thin cheeks were flushed with eagerness, and she held something carefully wrapped up in tissue paper. The old man laid down his pipe and his well-thumbed Sterne with a sigh, and watched her with an amused twinkle in his faded old eyes. Jeanet undid it carefully, and displayed a gorgeous scarlet-bound book with gilt-edged leaves.

"See, Captain," handing it to him with a little air of solemnity, as if she were investing him with some strange order, "here it is!"

He, falling into her mood, took it solemnly, turned to the back—no title, just a square of gilt lines; opened it—clean unwritten pages.

Jeanet had been watching his face, and a delighted smile broke over hers at his look of wondering question.

"An album, Jeanette? I must do you a little sketch in it!"

"No, Captain, it is not for me; it is for you. *It's for the book.* I got it on purpose, my own self, from Sophy's young man—he's a bookbinder; and now you must really and truly begin. I'm sorry it's not purple and gold, with those lovely clasps, you said; but afterwards, when it's written, you can have one like that." And, sliding up to his chair, and flicking a speck of dust off his shabby coat,

coat, "You'll begin it now, won't you? There is really a book inside your head; it isn't a fairy tale you made up just for me, is it? And you'll make a great name, and they'll put your picture in the papers, and all about you, and I'll cut out all the pieces and make an album, like Sophy does with her notices. She had a lovely one in the *Charing Cross Gazette*. The young man who wrote it owed mother rent, and she let him off for getting it in. And then when your sons know you have really made the book—they don't believe in it," with a note of scorn—"they'll want to take you away, but you won't forget as how little Jeanet gave you the book to write it in, will you?"

The Captain blew his nose and wiped his glasses, and kissed the little maid, and patted her head, and called her his little comfort, and promised her a whole chapter to herself; and to-morrow he would begin—without fail, to-morrow. Then he invited Jeanet to supper, and they decided upon fried fish and baked potatoes, and Jeanet laid the table-cloth, and he put on his threadbare overcoat and she her hat, and they went out joyous as only children at heart can be. The Captain chaffed the busy stout women frying the pieces a golden brown, and insisted on carrying the basket. Jeanet was careful not to get re-roasted potatoes, and gave the old man a wise little lecture because he bade a rogue of a news-boy to keep the halfpenny change from an evening paper; and he bought her a bunch of ragged bronze-brown chrysanthemums, and she tried hard to see that they were prettier than the close magenta ones.

They supped merrily, and whilst she mixed his punch for him he unlocked an old workbox, and found her a little silver fish, with a waggling tail, that had once served the dear white lady as a tape-measure; and then she sat at his feet and he told her more wonderful stories of bygone days, but he lost the thread of his

story at times, and names bothered him; sometimes, too, the tears welled up and his lips trembled under his old grey moustache, and his hand shook as he rubbed his glasses, and though the fires had not long begun nor the chestnut roasters taken up their winter places, and it seemed only a few weeks back that delicate spirals of smoke rose up from all the squares, with a pungent smell of burning leaves—surest London token of the coming of the fall—the old man sat huddled over the fire. His little friend, who had seen most of the serious sides of life, observed him anxiously as she whispered good-bye with her good-night."

"For I am going to Aunt Sarah's for a week, and I wish I wasn't going, Captain dear, but I'll write to you. I've filled the inkpot fresh and put a hassock for your feet, and told Bessie to mind your fire, and when I come back you'll read me all you have written in the book."

The old man, seeing her face clouded, promised her with forced gaiety to work like a Trojan, and kissed her little red hand with a touch of old-time grace.

Five days later Jeanet got a shakily written letter in reply to hers, with a comical little sketch of the Captain surrounded by icebergs, with icicles hanging from his beard; he wrote that he missed her, felt seedy, but to-morrow surely he would be better, and then he would write. Jeanet declared resolutely she must go home, and the next day when the shadows were gathering thickly and the lamplighter trotted from street to street, and the tinkle of the muffin bell told the hour of tea, the little maid surprised her family by her advent:

"How is the Captain?" was her first question.

"Indeed he's only middlin'. Bessy took him some gruel at dinner-time and made up the fire, for he said he was going to write

write, an' he asked about you. La, she do make a fuss about the Captain," she added to a crony, in for a gossip.

Jeanet stole upstairs, paused outside the door with a strange disinclination to enter. She knocked twice with caught breath ; no sound reached her from inside. She entered ; the cheap coal had burnt out to slate and grey white ash ; the shadows filled the room, accentuating the strange quiet. The Captain sat a little to one side with his chin sunk on his breast and his old hands folded on the closed book ; the quill pen shone whitely on the floor where it had dropped to his feet. Some sudden spell of awe kept Jeanet from touching the silent figure, and checked the cry of " Captain " on her lips. She went out, fetched in the lamp from the bracket on the landing and turned it up to its full height—gave one look, and uttered a long cry that brought them hurrying up from below, and woke the lodger's baby on the floor above.

And whilst they clustered round his chair and felt his heart and talked volubly of doctor and telegrams, Jeanet took the book reverently from under his hand, and hugging it to her breast burst into tears—to her alone it was of signification, had not his own always made a jest of it ?

"He would get up, the pore gentleman, he was fair set on writin' in his book ; I left 'im sittin' with the pen in 'is 'and," cried the girl.

When the ghastly details had been carried out and the Captain lay with a restful smile on his face, and sons and daughters had been and gone, and the undertaker's young man was talking it over in the kitchen, Jeanet stole with swollen lids and pinched features to the bedside of her best friend—to open the book. It had escaped every one's thought, but she had lain awake all night thinking of the wonderful tale it must hold, for the Captain, Bessy said, had sat with it upon his knee each day since her departure

departure. How she regretted having gone away, her dear Captain—well as the lips that had told her many of its wonders were silenced for ever, she would read it here, at his side, before they laid him away for ever.

She bolted the door and knelt down with a light on her face of faith and devotion. She opened the wonderful book—paused at the title with a look of surprise—turned the pages with eager fingers—all fair, all unsullied—and in trembling letters across the title-page of the golden book, that had been alike the dream of his life and its fate—his own name.



The Yellow Book

By Miss Gertrude D. Hammond



A Song

By Dollie Radford

OUTSIDE the hedge of roses
  Which walls my garden round,
And many a flower encloses,
  Lies fresh unfurrowed ground.

I have not delved, nor planted,
  In that strange land, nor come
To sow in soil enchanted
  Sweet promises of bloom.

My labours all have ended
  Within my fragrant wall,
The blossoms I have tended
  Have grown so sweet and tall.

But now in silver showers
  Your laughter falls on me,
And fairer than all flowers
  Your flower-face I see.

And

And bound no more by roses,
I break my barrier through,
And leave all it encloses,
Dear one, to follow you.

A New Poster

By Evelyn Sharp

I

It was the first of Mrs. Angelo Milton's original dinner-parties. Mrs. Angelo Milton had the reputation of being the most original hostess, if not in London, certainly in South Kensington where she lived. Such a reputation, in such a neighbourhood, was not perhaps difficult of acquisition, and Mrs. Milton had managed to acquire it by the simple though unusual method of being mildly eccentric within the limits of conventionality. She was thus characteristic neither of Bohemia nor of South Kensington; she amused the one, puzzled the other, and received them both on the third Wednesday in the month. She was daring in her selection of guests, clever in the way she made them entertain one another, and commonplace in her own conversation. The object of her life was to be distinguished, and in a great measure she succeeded in it; the only thing that was wanting was Mrs. Angelo Milton herself. Her house, her receptions, her friends all bore the mark of distinction; as a drama, the scenic effect was superb and the company far above the average, but the principal player remained mediocre. She had none of the elements of individuality; her dress was perfect and of the fashionable type, her features were intrinsically

intrinsically good, yet their whole effect was unsatisfactory; her very hair was abundant and ordinary. Yet she was clever—clever enough to know her own defects and to play them off upon other people, clever enough to have begun a fresh career at the age of twenty-six and to have followed it with perseverance and success. She belonged to the few who know how to invest the little capital Nature has given them; and none of the brilliant frequenters of her house who came and talked about themselves to their sympathetic hostess ever suspected that they were really there to establish her personality and not to advertise their own.

A perfectly new dinner-party was the luckiest inspiration that ever came to a tired hostess. To see her guests grouped at small tables, to make them all co-operate in the labour of conversation, to enjoy the triumphant consciousness of having combined them in the happiest manner possible, and to have reduced her own responsibility to the entertaining of three people only, was the highest consummation Mrs. Angelo Milton had ever attained. She sat in complete satisfaction, bathed in the becoming rose-coloured light shed by numerous shaded candles; and she even allowed herself under the influence of the prevailing ease of manner to become almost natural. She had selected her own party with scrupulous care; a pretty *débutante* for her *vis-à-vis*, who neither eclipsed nor reflected her; a black and white artist, very new, for herself; and an ugly boy to play with the *débutante*, which he was doing very charmingly.

"Such an improvement on the ordinary dinner-party," said little Margaret Cousins, with the experience of a first season in her voice.

"Awfully neat idea, is really; no need to listen to what the other chaps are saying, don't you know," said the ugly boy, who was still young, though he had left Cambridge a year ago.

"Do

"Do you ever listen to what the other chaps are saying, Mr. Askew?" asked the *débutante*.

"This is daring of you," the artist was saying in a lowered tone, not because he had anything confidential to say, but because it suited his style to be impressive.

"Since it proclaims my choice of companions?" asked his hostess, rather clumsily.

"I am more than sensible of the honour. But that was not my meaning; no. I meant because——"

"Because it gives my other guests the opportunity of criticising my new French *chef?*" she interrupted again, but with all the assurance of success.

"Say rather the opportunity of discussing their charming hostess," rejoined the artist, relieved from the necessity of finding his own reply.

"A new poster? Really?" said Margaret Cousins.

The artist turned round with a scarcely perceptible show of interest.

"What, another?" he asked carelessly.

The ugly boy said it was the same old thing, and then explained that it was one of the new things, a scarlet background with a black lady in one corner and a black tree with large roots in another corner, and some black stars scattered about elsewhere.

"Ah, yes," said the artist indifferently, "it is an advertisement for the Shakespeare Fountain Pen, or something to that effect. I saw it this morning."

"The Milton Fountain Pen," corrected his hostess with the smile of conversation; "I have noticed it on the placards sometimes; it bears my name you see."

The artist said the coincidence had not struck him at the time, but

nor that he should in future use no other pen on that account. The ugly boy, who was occupied with his savoury, said nothing; the *ingénue*, who had passed it, asked a simple question as though she wished for information.

"What has a black lady or a black tree got to do with Milton or a fountain pen?"

"Oh, nothing. It has got to advertise it, that's all," said the artist, smiling indulgently.

The ugly boy, who was now at liberty, said it was howling cheek of the painter chap to stick different things on a scarlet sheet and call it an advertisement for something that wasn't there.

"Perhaps," said his *vis-à-vis* with his irritating amiability. "I suppose you would have a penholder and a fountain with no background at all? That would be quite obvious of course."

"What is a fountain pen?" asked Mrs. Milton, who had an idea that the general conversation was not being a success. There were three more or less inaccurate definitions at once; she selected Margaret's, and smiled across at her.

"Margaret always knows these things," she told the others. "Margaret is literary, and makes one feel dreadfully frivolous sometimes."

Dicky Askew looked sad and felt that he could not talk any more about the comic papers. The ugly boy's literature was mainly pink. Margaret blushed and looked pleased, and said, "Oh, no," and added something irrelevant about Milton and the Puritan movement which suggested Macaulay.

"Margaret is still so deliciously young," sighed Mrs. Angelo.

"How nice to be at the age of local examinations when one hasn't forgotten all about Milton and those improving people! Really, it is as much as one can do now to get through the books

of

of the people one has to meet in society. By the way," she added exclusively to the artist, "Brindley Harrison is here to-night: do you know him? He is over there, just under the Burne-Jones, talking to——yes, that one. Have you read his last?"

After that the conversation remained particular and interesting until the hostess had to give the signal for retreat, upon which conventionality again claimed its victims, and there was no further evidence of innovation either in the music or the conversation that occupied the rest of the evening.

When the last carriage had rolled away, Mrs. Angelo Milton rang the bell and ordered something to eat. Then she walked round the room and extinguished all the wax lights herself, and turned the gas low, and sat down in the firelight. She was silent for a long time after the servants had left her, and she was terribly lonely. It was not a loneliness that comes as a natural result of departed company, but the much more subtle solitude of one who is anticipating a new companionship. When she had eaten her sandwiches mechanically, one by one, she stood up and leaned her head on the cold marble of the mantel-shelf, and something like an angry sob broke from her lips in the darkness.

"After seven years," she murmured, "to lose it all by loving Adrian Marks!"

She turned up the gas again with an impatient movement, then lighted a candle and held it up to a picture on the wall, a portrait of a middle-aged man with a bald head.

"Jim!" she cried involuntarily, "what would you say if you were to meet him?"

The idea struck her as so incongruous that she gave way to a nervous spasm of laughter and returned hurriedly to her seat by the fire. Her husband had been a successful commercial man, and the source of his wealth had been the invention of the Milton Fountain

tribute to his inconstancy, and ate the rest of his oysters with a pleased smile.

"Margaret Cousins is a seemly maiden, passing fair, and of a goodly wit," he said reflectively.

"You could say that of any of them. That's the oddest thing about women; the essentials are always the same in the ones we fall in love with," said Adrian, "but do keep to the point, little boy. I'll rave about Margaret after, if you'll only talk about Mrs. Angelo now."

"What's her first name? I can't talk about a woman in confidence and call her by her surname, especially when she's a widow."

"I don't know that she's got one. Heard from her this morning though, let's see what she signs herself; ah, here we are —Cynthia."

"That's a bit off," said Dicky in parenthesis, "never heard of a horse called Cynthia."

"You see," continued Adrian with a slightly worried air, "she doesn't know I twigged all about the Fountain Pen long ago, and she doesn't even know that I did the very poster we were talking about this evening. Shut up, Dicky, any blind idiot could have guessed that!—and she hasn't an idea how hard up I am, nor how many reasons there are for my marrying her."

"Play lightly," objected Dicky, "even for a woman that's an amazing amount of ignorance. And she's in love with you, too."

"Yes," sighed Adrian, "she *is* in love with me. Do you know, Dicky, it makes me almost hate myself sometimes when a sweet unsuspecting woman like that takes me on trust and thinks such an awful lot of me. I should have gone to the dogs long ago if it had not been for my women friends."

"Do you really think," asked Dicky, lighting up a cigar, "they have made any difference?"

Adrian looked across at his plain, shrewd little countenance and shook his head slowly.

"Dicky, you are very young. But if you don't mind we will stick to the subject."

Dicky said he was quite willing, and that women friends was as far as they had got. Adrian went on rather more gloomily than before:

"So you see it's all right as far as she is concerned. And as for myself—well, I suppose that's settled too. I never meant to get married at all, as you know, but I think it's not a bad thing for a man after all, and I don't see why I shouldn't marry Cynthia—do you? And of course I am extremely lucky to get such a good and sympathetic woman to marry me at all."

"At your age, and with your tailoring, it is wonderful," said the irrepressible Dicky. "By the way, how old is Cynthia?"

"From calculation I make it about thirty-two. She looks less. I am thirty-eight, though of course you wouldn't think it. There is really everything to make our union a happy one. But then, there's the governor."

"There always is," assented Dicky sadly.

"And he has sworn to disinherit me if I marry into commerce. He means it too, worse luck."

"What a played-out idea! Every decent chap marries into dollars nowadays; it's the thing to do. But that needn't matter; she's got fifteen thousand a year—must have—couldn't run that show on less, eh?"

"I haven't seen the will; she may lose it all if she marries again. I'm hanged if that would make any difference though, Dicky. I declare I'm fairly gone on her. I believe," continued Adrian

Adrian in a glow of sentiment, "I really believe I should propose if neither of us had a penny! I should like to know about that will, though."

"What a set of stale old properties you are inventing, Marks: irate father, inconvenient will, beautiful lady. You might be writing a novel in the last century."

"You might remember, Dicky," said Adrian impressively, "that I have nothing to do with the spirit of any other century than this one. Now, what's your advice? Shall I propose or not?"

Dicky Askew blinked his small eyes at him and considered for a moment.

"You'll never have a better chance of being accepted, I should say. Given a woman who on your own showing adores you so much that she doesn't see your imperfections, and to whom you are so attached that her fortune does not matter a jot—well, there doesn't seem anything else to do."

"Thanks awfully, little boy, you've helped me no end. I'll propose to-morrow, hanged if I don't. Not sure if I don't go down to Somerset House first, though; think about it in the morning. After all, you must remember Cynthia is not the only woman friend I've got who—I mean, the world is packed with good unselfish women who are ready to give us sympathy and affection and——"

"Fifteen thousand a year," added Dicky maliciously.

Adrian paused before he strolled away.

"If there should be anything wrong about that will, there's always dear little Margaret Cousins," he said thoughtfully.

"No, there isn't," shouted Dicky wrathfully; "you can leave Margaret out of this show anyhow. *She* wouldn't join anybody's army of women friends, so don't you make any mistake about it.

You

You wouldn't catch *her* wanting to save you from the clutches of all the other women, which is what your women friends are mostly engaged in doing for you. Besides, she funks you no end—says she can't make you out, or something."

"Really?" said Adrian with a gratified smile, "that's excellent material to go upon. I must cultivate her. See you again soon, little boy."

Margaret Cousins was lunching with Mrs. Angelo Milton the next day when the man-servant brought in a visiting card. She had come round to gossip over the dinner-party, to eat up the remains, and to find out all there was to know about Dicky Askew; so she had a valid reason to grumble when her hostess said she must go into the drawing-room at once.

"But make yourself at home, child, and have what you want and ring for what you don't," she said rather absently as she arranged her lace at the glass. "It is an old friend; I have not seen him for years. You can play with the poodle till I come back, can't you, darling?"

A sun-browned man, with an expectant smile on his face and rather a nervous consciousness of the hat and stick in his hand, was standing on the rug in the drawing-room when she went in. There was no diffidence in his greeting, however, and no doubt of a welcome in the hard hand he put out to her, though the one she laid in it was cold and passive. They had nothing to say for a minute or two, and when they had settled on two chairs rather far apart, and he had deposited his belongings on the floor, the few remarks they made were necessary and usual.

"So you have come to England after all, Willis? You always said you would."

"Yes, Cynthia. It is an old promise of eight years' standing, isn't it?"

"When

"When did you arrive?"

"This morning only. I crossed in the night boat from Dieppe. There was a fog in the Channel."

"Was there? I believe there always is by the night boat. Have you had lunch?"

"I had a chop in the City: chose it myself, and saw it cooked. Not your style, eh? Well, and how long have you lived here?"

"Oh, how did you find out my address?"

"I went to your agents, of course. I saw that new poster of yours at Victoria, though what it means the Lord only knows, and that brought you back to my mind."

"So it needed a new poster to do that? Oh, Willis, how you must have altered!"

It was the first human note in the conversation, and Willis Ruthven broke into a relieved laugh.

"You haven't altered much, Cynthia, in spite of your dandy house," he said, and brought his chair closer to hers.

"I don't know. I fancy I must have. Or else it is you," she replied, meeting the kindly gaze of his keen eyes with something like discomfort.

"Why?"

"Well, you look so—so physical," she said, and laughed.

"In the old days, when Jim was there, you used to tell me I was the intellectual one."

"Ah yes, when Jim was there. You seemed so by contrast to the commercial element."

There was distaste, almost contempt, in her voice, and he noticed it.

"Don't be hard on the commercial element; it has treated you well enough," he said gently, with a swift glance round the room.

"Oh

"Oh yes, I know all that," she cried impatiently, "you have dinned it into my ears so often. It has made England what it is, and so on. I must say that it has not much to be proud of! I *loathe* the commercial spirit."

"Yet you have so much of it yourself," said Willis with a smile.

"I? The commercial spirit?"

"Surely. Do you not trade with every bit of resource at your command, and very profitably too? It is your commercial spirit that has made you use up that old Italian ancestor of yours for a second name. You trade with your beauty, your wits, your position; Jim traded with the Milton Fountain Pen. Where is the difference?"

"I have always noticed," said Cynthia, biting her lip, "that men who have travelled about alone for eight years become intolerably prosy."

Margaret Cousins was very tired of playing with the poodle long before her friend was at liberty. It was not until tea-time that the front door banged and Mrs. Angelo called down the stairs to her to come up to the boudoir.

"It is so much cosier to have tea here when we are alone," she said cheerfully. "I hope you have not been dull, dear. Do you mind bringing the kettle? Such an old friend, I have not seen him for eight years."

"He must be rather ancient," said Margaret candidly. The poodle had made her cross.

But Mrs. Angelo Milton did not hear her remark: she was leaning back in her chair, smiling at her thoughts.

"Tell me, Margaret, she said suddenly, "what do you think women admire most in men? Is it good looks?"

"No," said Margaret, thinking of the ugly boy.

"I am

"I am not sure," said Cynthia, thinking of Adrian Marks; "if not, what is it?"

"Good tailoring perhaps," suggested Margaret, still thinking of Dicky.

"Oh no," said Mrs. Angelo, remembering the cut of Willis's frock-coat, "I think it is temperament."

"Conversation I should say," corrected Margaret.

Cynthia put down her cup with decision.

"We are all wrong, Margaret. I have it. We like them to be masterful. It doesn't matter what they are if they know how to master us. Let them do it by their looks, or their brains, or their qualities; but if they do it, we are theirs. And it isn't a flattering reflection for either sex."

Margaret pouted, and recalled Dicky Askew, and refused to agree. But Cynthia was convinced. She was thinking only of Willis Ruthven.

II

Cynthia felt very unsettled during the next few days. When a woman has half-unwillingly made up her mind to an action that repels while it enthrals her, she can be easily deterred from it by a very small disturbing element. And the disturbing element in this case was the reappearance of Willis Ruthven. It was not only that the revival of an old friendship had blunted the edge of a new and untried one, nor wholly because the effete and decadent culture of Adrian Marks suffered by contrast with the frank and healthy personality of Willis. For she was affected on the other hand by the dread of being again absorbed in the old atmosphere she had hated, and this dread was kept alive by the knowledge that her

her early history was no longer her own secret, but was shared by some one else who saw no reason for concealing it. She had a real and strong friendship for Willis Ruthven, one of many years' growth, and she chafed at the influence it still had over her, now that she wanted to turn her back for ever upon all that it recalled to her mind. Willis represented the whole spirit of that time she wished to forget; he knew every detail of the past she had tried to blot out of her life with a persistence that was almost morbid. There was something pathetic in the way this woman, who had lived two different lives, feared lest the first one should claim her again for its own, something pitiful in the unconscious comparison she drew between the two men who competed for her thoughts, between the one who by his presence dragged her down to the old level, and the one who dwelt only in the surroundings she loved.

It is probable that she would not have thought so much about Adrian had not Willis gone out of town directly after his first interview with her, and only testified his existence to her by a refusal of a dinner invitation which annoyed her as much by its brevity and curtness as by the business-like paper on which it was written. Nor would she have bestowed so much notice on this trifling occurrence had not Adrian Marks also piqued her, about the same time, by neither calling upon her nor otherwise seeking her society; and although she made a point of frequenting the houses where there was a possibility of meeting him, all her efforts were attended with failure, as such conscious efforts always are.

She met Dicky Askew one hot day in June at an afternoon reception. It was a great crush, and he was not looking particularly happy on the crowded landing where the stream of people coming upstairs had imprisoned him.

"Let's sit out on the balcony," he proposed; "I'm fairly played with

with this awful crush—aren't you? I had to offend millions of decent people by getting the mother into a chair, and I don't suppose she will be able to move until I go and dig her out again."

The ugly boy, although he cultivated a pose of selfishness like the others in his set, had a great devotion for his mother, which was so unusual a phenomenon among his friends that they never quite took him seriously about it, and had to suspect him of ulterior motives before they felt in a position to admire him for it. Nobody ever did take the ugly boy seriously about anything, but Cynthia was in the mood this afternoon to be touched by any sign of natural affection, and she followed him outside the window with more graciousness than she usually showed to any one so unimportant.

"Have you seen your friend Mr. Marks lately?" she asked him. She felt that it was not necessary to lead up to the subject with Dicky Askew. He looked steadily across the street at the house opposite, and hesitated.

"Marks? Not for millions of days. Have you?"

"I? Oh no. I don't know why I asked you. I thought you were such friends, that's all. You always suggest Mr. Marks, you know."

Dicky glanced doubtfully at her.

"The fact is," he said with an impulse of confidence, "we've had a beastly row; I'm afraid it's really all up this time. I haven't seen him once since Sunday."

Cynthia murmured something and waited eagerly for more. The ugly boy grew expansive.

"The fact is," he said again, leaning over the balustrade, "Adrian is so beastly rotten. And she's an awfully decent little girl, don't you see."

"Ah,"

"Ah," said Cynthia, also leaning over the balustrade and counting the paving-stones feverishly.

"It's all tommy when a man talks about his women friends. It won't wash," continued the ugly boy in a tone of disgust; "it only means he likes to ring the changes like all the other boys, and won't own to it. The worst of it is that he does it so well. *She* doesn't care a jot for him, of course."

"She doesn't?" said Cynthia joyfully.

Dicky looked at her reproachfully.

"What do you think? I never meant she would chuck me over for *him*. A fresh little nipper like that isn't likely to go nuts on a played-out painter chap. That *would* be common. All the same, it isn't fair on a fellow, is it?"

"No," said Cynthia sadly, "it is not fair on a fellow."

Something in her tone recalled Dicky for an instant from his own absorbing interests.

"I say, you know," he said with a smile, "if you cared to help me I don't know why you shouldn't. You may if you like, you know—really."

Cynthia failed to express any gratitude, and Dicky wandered on.

"If you weren't playing so poorly with Adrian he wouldn't be fooling around with Margaret, and if you'd only just be decent to him again, don't you know——"

Here he was really obliged to stop, for he found Cynthia staring at him coldly.

"Oh, hang," he said impetuously, "I'm fairly gone on Margaret, don't you see."

"Margaret?"

"Yes, of course. There isn't anybody else, is there?" said Dicky, a little sulkily.

"Oh," said Cynthia, with a slight curl of her lip, "I don't think

think you need be jealous. Margaret is a dear child, but she is not at all the sort of girl Mr. Marks would be likely to admire."

"Wouldn't he, though?" cried Dicky fiercely. "He couldn't help it—nobody could help it; she's the decentest little brick of a girl——"

"Oh, very well; I thought you didn't want him to admire her."

"No more I do, confound him! But he can't help admiring her, for all that."

"Then I don't see how I am to help you. Supposing we change the subject; I am dreadfully tired of discussing other people's love affairs."

"That soun ls like a challenge to discuss your own," said Dicky, with a shrewd smile. He was an obstinate little fellow when he had an object in view.

"Mr. Askew!" said Cynthia, rising with great dignity.

"Oh, I say, don't," he said, anxiously, and placed himself in front of her; "I'm an awful ass, of course; but I do know that Adrian was right on you a week ago, and—what the dickens has happened to everybody since?"

She nodded to him enigmatically and disappeared in the crowd, and he went to extricate his mother. They met again in the hall as every one was leaving.

"I shall bring Adrian in to call to-morrow evening, may I?" he said.

"If it will tend to a reconciliation between you, I shall be delighted," she answered blandly.

So she sent a note round the next day to ask Margaret to drop in to dinner, and assured herself that she was going through the whole tiresome business in order to bring about the child's engagement

engagement with the ugly boy. Margaret's chaperon was an aunt who did not look after her much; and the ugly boy was getting on well in his profession and had good connections; so Mrs. Angelo felt she was only being virtuous when she put on her most becoming demi-toilette and laid herself out to be amusing the whole of dinner-time.

"By the way, Mr. Askew said he might come in to coffee," she said casually in the drawing-room afterwards; "that was why I asked you to dinner."

"I know; so is Mr. Marks. I met them both in the park to-day. That is why I put on my yellow dress. Mr. Marks likes me in yellow—I look peculiarly distinguished in it, he says!"

"Mr. Marks says a variety of extravagant things to his lady friends."

"Oh, Cynthia, are there really such a lot of them? Dicky is always dinning Mr. Marks' lady friends into my ears till I cease to believe in them at all. There aren't any, are there?"

"Who is Dicky, dear?"

"Dicky Askew, of course," laughed Margaret. "Is there another Dicky?"

"Apparently not for you; but it is difficult to believe that you met him for the first time only a fortnight ago."

"Ah!" said little Margaret wisely, "but that was at your original dinner-party, and that counted for six ordinary meetings with auntie. Besides, you didn't give me a chance of talking to any one else that evening; I never spoke to Mr. Marks at all except about that hideous new poster. Did you see it noticed in the morning paper, by the way?"

"What poster?" asked Mrs. Angelo Milton.

"The Fountain Pen poster," don't you remember? Why we talked ever such a lot about it, and——"

"Oh,

"Oh, I can't recall it, then. Posters don't interest me in the least; they are a vulgar form of art, I never think of looking at them. Are you getting on at the Slade, Margaret?"

"Yes—no—I don't know. But why don't you like posters, Cynthia?" persisted Margaret. "Mr. Marks doesn't call them vulgar; Mr. Marks paints them himself."

"Mr. Marks didn't paint that one, anyhow; it is a hideous piece of affectation——"

"Then you do remember it?" cried Margaret triumphantly.

"No, I don't. How you do bother, child," said Cynthia crossly. "You've got posters on the brain. Mr. Marks has evidently been making you one of his disciples."

"Mr. Marks?" said Margaret proudly. "Oh yes, he has taught me such a lot about pictures——"

She paused abruptly as the door opened, and the two men were announced.

"Yes, very pretty, isn't it? A present from a friend in America," said Cynthia, and rose to receive them.

Poor Margaret did not learn any more about posters that evening, for Mr. Marks spent it in the boudoir with his hostess. It is true that the door between the two rooms was left half-open, and that Cynthia sometimes raised her voice in the interests of propriety to make a remark to the couple on the drawing-room sofa, but the conversation could not, on the whole, be termed a general one. Nor was it altogether fluent at first. Nobody but Cynthia had really mastered the situation, and she was almost too nervous to play her part. The ugly boy was quite happy at having planned the whole meeting, and felt quite sure it was going to settle the future of every one present, and he had consequently plenty to say, but he found a curious difficulty in saying it, and Margaret, to whom he said it, was an unwilling listener. She was cross at being supposed

supposed to be in love with Dicky, and at having to endure his conversation all the evening; while Adrian Marks, who was far older and more interesting, dismissed her with a hand-shake and strolled after Cynthia into the other room.

Adrian Marks himself was full of pleasing sensations. A comfortable chair in a softly lighted, pretty room, and a clever woman to talk to, represented his favourite form of diversion; and the gratifying suspicion of having piqued her slightly by his remissness in calling added a zest to the situation.

But he had read the will at Somerset House, and he did not mean it to be more than a pleasant evening.

"Do you mind the window being open? It is hot in here, and besides, I like to see the trees in the square—don't you?" said Cynthia, settling herself in the low window-seat.

"I like anything that affords an excuse for a good pose," he said, and looked at her and not at the trees.

It was a favourable opening, and Mrs. Angelo Milton followed it up well. She had her own game to play this evening, and she was going to stake her happiness to win it. All the thraldom of her American life, all its sordidness and its gilded opulence, lay clearly before her mind and tortured her with its vividness; it only needed a decided action on her part to put it away from her for ever. And the man who could save her from its haunting memories was Adrian, whom she thought she loved sufficiently to marry because she had felt hurt when he neglected her. She knew he loved her too in his narrow, selfish way. And she felt tolerably sure she could win him if she tried; and, ignoble process though it was, she did try.

"You have been out of town?" she asked him when they had touched on various indifferent topics.

"Since

"Since I saw you? I hardly remember; I think not—no. Why do you ask?"

She laughed.

"How absurd of me! For the moment I forgot that of course you did not pay conventional calls after dinner-parties as every one else."

He paused just long enough to give weight to the answer.

"I should not so far dishonour a charming hostess as to call after a dinner-party. When I have made a friendship with a woman I never spoil it by afternoon calls."

"That sounds rather interesting. But paying calls is an odd kind of substitute, don't you think?"

"It is the only substitute for a man with a spirit of adventure may result from an interview."

"Afraid? You? After all your experiences I should like to know whether you have the same formula for your enemies as for your lady friends, Mr. Marks."

"Well, no. There is the formula for the reticent and the reticent for the bold; the [illegible] for the young and the playful for the old; the [illegible] for the married and the [illegible] for the maiden; and so on."

"And to which class do I belong?"

"To no class, my dear [illegible]."

"You said that so flatteringly that I [illegible] formula after all."

"True fluency is never the result of study, and [illegible] a spontaneous one. [illegible] an excuse for spontaneity."

Cynthia looked [illegible] road, and yawned lazily.

"We are being dreadfully [illegible] you

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"Since I saw you? I hardly remember; I think not—no. Why do you ask?"

She laughed.

"How absurd of me! For the moment I forgot that of course you did not pay conventional calls after dinner-parties like every one else."

He paused just long enough to give weight to his answer.

"I should not so far dishonour a charmingly unconventional dinner-party. When I have made a friendship with a woman I never spoil it by afternoon calls."

"That sounds rather interesting. But staying away altogether is an odd kind of substitute, don't you think?"

"It is the only substitute for a man who is afraid of what may result from an interview."

"Afraid? You? After all your experience? I often wonder whether you have the same formula of conversation for all your lady friends, Mr. Marks."

"Well, no. There is the attractive formula for the timid and the reticent for the bold; the intellectual for the young and the playful for the old; the decorous for the matron and the indecorous for the maiden; and so on."

"And to which class do I belong?"

"To no class, my dear lady. You are unique."

"You said that so fluently that I shall suspect you of a common formula after all."

"True fluency is never the result of study, and my remark was a spontaneous one. Won't you acknowledge that you gave me an excuse for spontaneity?"

Cynthia looked into the depths of the plane-tree across the road, and yawned lazily.

"We are being dreadfully brilliant, and I am always afraid of you

you when you are brilliant. Won't you smoke? I have always noticed that when a man has nothing to do with his hands he becomes frankly untruthful."

"You will join me, I hope?"

"For the same reason?"

"Oh no," he said, taking a cigarette from the box she handed over to him. "But I have always noticed that when a woman begins to smoke she becomes dangerously confidential."

"You are quite safe," she said drily. "I never smoke. Mr. Askew, will you have a cigarette? Margaret doesn't mind."

The two from the drawing-room made a diversion by coming in and fetching the cigarettes. There was a search for matches, a few remarks about the beauty of the evening and the size of the plane-tree, and then a gravitation towards the former arrangement. This time, Adrian was sitting on the window-ledge, and Mrs. Angelo had slipped into a low chair close by.

"Life is very full of stupid arrangements," said the artist presently. He was thinking of the amazing selfishness of the first husband when he made his will.

"For example?" she murmured. She was thinking of the small flat they would have to take when they were living on his earnings alone, and she had sacrificed her fortune for the artistic atmosphere.

"The distribution of—people," said the artist. He had almost said—of wealth.

"Yes," said Cynthia dreamily, "the wrong ones have to be for ever together, and if we try to sort ourselves differently the old influences go on tugging at us until they prove strongest after all and absorb us again. It is horrible."

"It is merely the planetary system," said Adrian, looking up at the stars, "and it gives the clever people lots of copy."

"I don't

"I don't see why we should be sacrificed to the clever people, they have so many compensations. It is the stupid people who can only feel things, who are the really important factors of life, and they have all the suffering," cried Cynthia bitterly. She was forgetting the part she had planned for herself.

"What are we talking about?" said Adrian suddenly.

"You were being brilliant again," she said, collecting herself with an effort.

"And my cigarette has gone out," he laughed, and went across to a candle to light it.

They listened mechanically to the voices through the open door.

"It's no use, it won't draw, I tell you. Nobody could make it draw, it's got stuffed up with something. I am quite sure the strings I have been eating are not tobacco at all. It's the stupidest cigarette I ever smoked."

"It looks a bit played, doesn't it? You've used all my matches and the spills hang out in the other room. Stick to it a moment while I freeze on to a coal, will you?"

Margaret evidently had no difficulty in sticking to the cigarette, and Dicky must have achieved the extraordinary feat of freezing on to a coal, for there was no more conversation in the drawing-room for the next few moments, and when it began afresh a piano-organ in the street below completely drowned it.

"That's a good effect," said Adrian, leaning over the window-box, "the lamps and the background of bushes, and the weird light on that man's face—awfully fine, isn't it?"

She came and looked out with him.

"Very," she said; "have you been painting much lately?"

"No. I've been literally off colour. Weather, I suppose."

"Or a new lady friend?" she suggested, under cover of the clanging music in the street.

Her eyes had a fascinating light in them when she looked mischievous, and Adrian mentally included his old father and the late Mr. Milton in the same big curse. It was hard, and it grew harder as the evening wore on, that every one should put obstacles in the way of his marrying one of the few women he had ever really liked. He felt quite sorry, too, for her, and wished magnanimously he could do something to lessen her evident infatuation. But he felt most sorry for himself.

"Possibly," he replied gaily; "it is generally that. I am a bad lot, you know, Mrs. Milton."

He looked at her narrowly, but she only laughed and ran her fingers through the lobelia in the window-box.

"You don't think I am very bad, do you?" he asked, bending a little towards her.

"I think you would be exceedingly disappointed if I did'nt think so," she retorted, without looking at him. The organ had moved on, and the strains of a popular air came faintly round the corner and mingled with the rustle of the plane-trees and the passing footfall of the policeman. The conversation in the drawing-room was no longer distinguishable, and the only distractions came from outside. Adrian drew in his head and stood a little behind her.

"I should like to know what you do think about me," he said curiously; "is it something very bad?"

"It is something quite formless," she replied indifferently.

"Do you think about me at all?" he asked, putting his hands in his pockets and keeping them there with an effort.

"As much, possibly, as you think about me."

"And do you know how much that is?"

"Just so much thought as a man is likely to bestow on one woman when there are twenty others."

She



...cting now, not to gain her point, but to hide her real ...nd unconsciously she won her game, as it must always

...do you say that?" he asked, coming nearer to her.
...t I who say it. I am merely repeating what you have ...dozens of times. What nonsense we are talking! Shall ...to the others?"
...clock struck slowly from a neighbouring church tower, ...ood and counted the strokes in silence as though the ...tal effort was a sort of relief to their constraint. Then ...d a little and felt his touch on her bare arm.
...go, Cynthia."
...shed her hand against his lips and pulled her almost ...wards him.
...re are not twenty others," he whispered.
...the two men left the house together half an hour later ...uttered an exclamation in an unduly loud tone.
...y, that's rather strong, isn't it?" said Dicky, whose reflec-...re of a peculiarly happy nature.
not nearly strong enough for the fools who make wills," Adrian, and drove off alone in a hansom.

III

a woman who has staked everything and won the game then she expected, Mrs. Angelo Milton wore a singularly ...fied appearance when she came downstairs the next ...g. She wrote letters in her boudoir until the smell of the ...r flowers became intolerable and she had to take refuge in wing-room; and there she had two separate quarrels with the

the maid over the dusting of the ornaments and the arrangement of the flowers, and ended with the inevitable threat that she would in future do them both herself. This she began at once to carry into effect by walking about the room with a duster and making herself very hot and cross. When she had broken a valuable Venetian glass, and made the startling discovery that all the dust she dissipated settled somewhere else directly afterwards, she hid the duster under a sofa cushion, collected all the flowers out of all the vases and piled them in a heap in the fender. Then she sat down on the hearth-rug and looked at them helplessly, and felt very foolish, when Margaret came in without being announced and laughed at her.

"My dear Cynthia, what *is* the matter, and whatever are you doing on the floor?" cried the girl.

"I'm doing the flowers," cried Cynthia briskly; "how jolly you look. Did you trim that hat yourself?"

"Yes, it's my old Louise, don't you remember? But what's the matter?"

"Matter?" cried Mrs. Angelo in a tone of amazement, "what should be the matter? I am particularly happy this morning. Something very nice that I wanted very much indeed has happened to me, and I never felt more pleased about anything in my life."

"You've got a very funny way of looking pleased," said Margaret candidly, "and it's more than I feel myself. I've come round to tell you something, Cynthia, something very important and not at all pleasant to either of us. But hadn't you better get off the floor first?"

"Well, what is it, child?" asked Mrs. Angelo when she had limped with two cramped legs to the nearest chair.

"I only wish you to understand quite clearly that I am not in love

love with Dicky Askew, whatever Dicky Askew may be with me, and that I won't be left alone with Dicky Askew until I have heard all his stories twice over and he is obliged to propose for the sake of more conversation. I never want to speak to Dicky Askew again; I should like him to be—obliterated."

"My dear," said Cynthia, "I don't keep Dicky Askew on the premises. Did you really put on a new hat on purpose to come and tell me something that doesn't concern me at all?"

"Doesn't concern you?" cried Margaret. "I should like to know whom it does concern then."

"Dicky Askew, I should say. Really, my dear child, I am very sorry I mistook your feelings; I won't make up a party for you again."

"It was not," said Margaret with great dignity, "the party that I objected to. It was only Dicky Askew."

"I did it out of kindness," replied Cynthia, ignoring her insinuation.

"Then I hope you will never ask me to dinner again out of kindness, or if you do, please shut me in here with the man I am *not* in love with," responded Margaret. "I should not have minded at all if I had spent the evening with the man I was *not* in love with, last night."

"I think you are right," said Cynthia quietly, and she stroked the child's hot cheek soothingly as she spoke, "passing the evening with the man you are in love with is very exhausting indeed. We will try the opposite arrangement next time. Will you come out with me this afternoon?"

"Where to?" asked Margaret suspiciously.

"Hurlingham, of course."

"It's too bad," cried the girl indignantly, "you *knew* he was going

going to be there! One would think there was no one in the world but Dicky Askew."

"One would, to hear you talk," said Cynthia.

When she was alone again, she went to the writing-table and tried to write a letter. She made two rough copies and tore them up, began a third and burst into tears in the middle. The anticipation of the artistic atmosphere for the rest of her life did not seem to be exhilarating.

"Mr. Ruthven," announced the man-servant.

"Oh, how do you do?" said Cynthia with desperate composure.

"What's the matter?" he asked bluntly, just as Margaret had done, "and what are all those flowers on the floor for? It looks like a funeral."

"It isn't—they're not—oh don't," said Cynthia with an hysterical sob.

Willis had hold of her hand still and drew her on to the sofa beside him.

"Something seems to have disturbed you," he said, and cleared his throat sympathetically; "what is it, eh?"

"I can't very well tell you," she replied with an effort to be calm.

"Then don't," said Willis, in the tone he might have used in soothing a child; "we'll talk about something else instead. I was down at Johnson's just now——"

"Johnson's? Whatever did you go to my agent's for?" she asked in a surprised tone.

"To ask him if your affairs were in a satisfactory condition," he replied frankly.

"Why did you want to know!"

"For reasons I will tell you presently."

"And

"And pray, what did he say about my affairs?"

"Oh, excellent report, never been selling better, largely owing to that new poster he says; it just wanted that to freshen up the sale a bit. Bless me, what have I said now, Cynthia?"

"Oh, nothing. I am sick of that new poster. Margaret was full of it yesterday. Everybody is full of it. Why did they want a new poster to freshen up the sale just now? I don't want the horrible money."

She wondered why he looked so pleased.

"Don't you really, Cynthia? Would you give it up willingly if—if you, well, if the terms of the will had to be fulfilled?"

She turned and looked at him with a hunted look in her eyes.

"How did you know? What makes you ask me that?" she burst out.

"Of course I knew, my dear," he answered with his genial smile; "why, I made Jim add that codicil myself."

"You? *You* made him? Willis, I don't understand. Why did you?"

"For the same reason that I have come here this morning, Cynthia. Is it so difficult to understand, then?"

There was a slight tremble in the bluff tones, but she did not notice it. She was so absorbed in her own engrossing affairs this morning that her faculties had grown incapable of receiving any impression from outside. She continued to look at him questioningly.

"What reason?" she asked.

"Because I knew what you didn't know then, poor child—that Jim was dying. And I meant to come back for you after seven years and take you for my own—if you would come. We were such good friends, Cynthia, and—I thought perhaps you would come

come. So I made Jim put in that clause about the property. You see, I meant your love for me to stand the test of a sacrifice, and I wanted mine to be free from a suspicion of self-interest. Do you blame me very much, dear?"

She let him finish his speech without interruption. Her first impulse was to laugh hysterically; every nerve and every instinct she possessed seemed alive; it almost hurt her to think; and the main impression she gathered from his words was the humorous aspect of them in the confidence of success that underlay their humility. Why was every one so sure of being accepted by her?

She did not speak for an instant or two. She sat and stared stupidly in front of her. He came a little closer to her with a smile on his face, and then she broke away from him with a distracted cry. It seemed to his slowly awakening comprehension as though the air he was breathing were shivered by the pain of that cry.

"Oh, Willis, don't! Go away, leave me, hate me, can't you? Oh, don't you see? I can't, I can't. Take your eyes away, they hurt me so. I cannot marry you now. What evil power sent you here this morning? Why couldn't you wait until everybody knew? Don't you understand, I—I have promised some one else? There, go."

It was his turn now to be silent, and to stare in complete stupefaction. She bore it as long as she could, and then with a bitter sense of the comedy of the situation she stammered out a trembling supplication:

"Oh, Willis, do scold me—or something. Don't be so ridiculously unlike yourself!"

She crouched away from him in the far corner of the sofa, and buried her face in the cushions. There was no sound except the rushing

rushing in her ears for several minutes. When he spoke again it seemed as though a wave were receding slowly and unwillingly on the sea-shore.

"I am very sorry, Cynthia. Of course I am going—to be sure, yes."

She was conscious that he rose from the sofa and stood a little away from her.

"I suppose you wouldn't mind my knowing his name? Don't tell me if you would sooner not," said his voice, grown gentler still.

A woman rarely finds it difficult to pronounce the name of her lover, and Cynthia recovered some of her self-possession in the effort.

"I don't suppose you have ever heard of him. His name is Marks—Adrian Marks."

There was one of those rapid transitions from artificial composure to natural display of feeling, and Cynthia, listening dully to his movements, heard the springs of the sofa suddenly creak again as Willis dropped back heavily on to his seat.

"Bless my soul!" he said in his own voice and manner.

Cynthia raised herself and looked coldly at him.

"Adrian Marks?" he repeated, smoothing his hair with a large white handkerchief. "Adrian Marks?"

"Do you know him?" asked Cynthia curtly.

"Know him? Rather think I do! Little unphysical bit of a man—eh? Hair getting thin on the top, sallow complexion, no hands to speak of—should think I did know him, that's all. Do you really mean Adrian Marks? Impossible!"

"He is an artist. I don't expect you to understand what that means. And I am going to marry him, which I think ought to spare him your jeers. And I really think we had better end this useless discussion."

"Bless

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Willis again, "but we are only at the beginning of it. My poor Cynthia, you must have wanted to marry very badly."

Mrs. Angelo made a struggle to retain her dignity.

"I don't think you have at all grasped that I am engaged to Mr. Marks——"

"Well, it is a bit difficult," acknowledged Willis; "why, I could wipe the floor with him in one—— Does he know about the will?"

"He did not know until I told him," said Cynthia proudly, making the most of her one advantage, "and then he said my poverty only made me more precious to him: Mr. Marks, also, is ready to take me for myself."

The insinuation in her last words was meant to impress her hearer, but he only thrust his hands into his pockets and nodded at his boots, and made a vulgar exclamation.

"You bet he is, quite ready," he muttered incredulously. "That sounds like Mr. Adrian Marks, doesn't it? Oh yes, of course."

Cynthia sat with burning cheeks and said nothing. Willis got up with a sigh and looked down at her searchingly.

"Do you really think you are in love with Adrian Marks, Cynthia? Do you really?"

It was the question she had put to herself doubtingly for many weeks, but to hear it from the lips of another destroyed her last remnant of composure.

"It is easy for you to sneer," she cried angrily, "you who never had a thought apart from commerce, and the making of gold, and the heartless game of getting on in the world. What right have you to depreciate a man behind his back because he lives by his intellect and his talent, and because he moves in a world

world you have no suspicion of? It is mean and unmanly of you."

Willis by no means showed himself disconcerted at this outburst. She was in the mood that was most familiar to him, the one in which he had seen her most often before, and he brightened considerably at the opportunities it offered him.

"Doesn't he get paid for his pictures then, eh?" he asked with a chuckle.

"I don't mind how much you laugh," cried Cynthia, "I have heard all those stale arguments before, and they are quite fruitless, every one. I am glad I never need listen to them any more; I am glad there is some one who can lift me out of my old miserable surroundings, and who can't allude to them either because he never knew anything about them. Adrian will never know any more of my history than I choose to tell him, never! I am glad I am going to throw away my ill-gotten fortune, the price of trade and robbery and everything I loathe. I am glad, glad, glad!"

Willis Ruthven gave a long whistle and strode over to the window before he spoke.

"Who told you that Marks didn't know anything about you?" he asked sharply.

"What do you mean?" she said, with a vague feeling of alarm.

"Well, my dear girl, I suppose that the fool who painted that nonsensical poster of yours must have known what he was painting it for, eh? Not that the poster itself proves it, to be sure."

Cynthia did not speak. The artistic atmosphere was being slowly dissipated.

"All I know is," went on Willis from the window, "that when I was down at Johnson's this morning, this dandy artist

you

you mention happened to descend from a world of his own in order to look in about the payment for that particular poster. Do you mean to tell me he doesn't know who you are? Bless my soul, Cynthia, it's time you had some one to look after you."

The delusion in which she had been living was shattered at one blow. Cynthia cowered for a moment beneath it, and then collected herself again with an instinct of self-preservation. She rose and walked over to the fireplace and began picking up the flowers. Her face was quite white, but she kept it turned away from him, and when she spoke it was in a tone of exaggerated composure.

"If you have said all you want to say, Willis, we will drop the subject. You have given me a good deal of gratuitous information about my private affairs, and I don't find it very amusing. I am rather busy this morning, too."

But Willis had no intention of taking the hint to leave. He came away from the window and spoke to her instead.

"You poor little woman, to think that I should have to be the one to tell you what any man would have twigged in a brace of shakes," he said in a sympathetic tone as he rubbed his hat with his coat sleeve, "I always did have to look after you, didn't I, Cynthia?"

Cynthia nearly choked in an attempt to tell him to leave her, but he stood up in the middle of the room and went on speaking, quite unconscious of the storm that was raging in her mind.

"But there, of course it was only a fancy freak on your part. Lord, what inexplicable creatures women are, to be sure. However a fine woman like you, Cynthia, with your taste and your head could have but there, of course you didn't care about him really, how could you? Poor child, poor child. I won't bother you

you any more now ; you'll like to think it over a bit—women like to think things over, eh ?"

And he really went that time, without the farewell greeting she was dreading and yet longed for ; and she sat up and listened to his retreating footstep on the stairs, and felt she would have done anything in her power to make him come back and scold and comfort her all at once for her foolishness. Yet she did not make an effort to recall him, but sat on the floor instead and wept hot tears of shame and disappointment over his stick and gloves. And Willis walked away down the street with his arms swinging and his hat at the back of his head.

How he spent the day never transpired, but to Cynthia it was the longest day of her life. She rang for the maid to clear up the confusion of the drawing-room, and went upstairs to put powder on her face.

Then she gave herself up to the consideration of her misfortunes, and went without her lunch. She countermanded the carriage and issued the mandate of "Not at home," passed the afternoon in her bedroom where she persuaded herself she was going to be very ill, and took anti-pyrine, which she had heard was a preventive against something. About five o'clock she changed her dress, and made rather a substantial tea on finding to her disgust that she was healthily hungry, and then she sat on the balcony without a vestige of a headache left, and envied the cheerful people who passed in their carriages, and wished somebody would call.

Somebody did call about an hour before dinner-time, but he sent his card up first with a pencilled message upon it.

"You can show Mr. Ruthven up, and tell cook not to make a second entrée to-night," she said, making herself effective on a couch near the window. She had decided that her attitude was to be smiling indifference, but she never thought of it again when Willis

Willis burst into the room in front of the stately footman, seized both her hands in a friendly grasp and straightway burlesqued her studied pose.

"My dear silly little woman," he said, and looked at her and laughed mirthfully.

"Willis, I'm not, I won't be ——"

"You'll have to be," he said, laughing more than ever, and kissing the tips of her fingers on both hands.

"Let me go," cried Cynthia fiercely.

"Do you mean that?" he said, loosening his clasp and looking directly at her.

Cynthia turned away from him, and stamped her foot.

"I don't know," she muttered sulkily.

"Of course you don't," said Willis jovially, "women never do. We always have to make up their minds for them. You're as bad as any of them, Cynthia."

"You talk as though I had nothing to do but to listen to you," cried Cynthia angrily.

"You don't look to me as though you had done much else since you got up this morning," replied Willis bluntly.

"Is that my fault?" she exclaimed with burning cheeks. "Can I help your coming and wasting all my time? When I tell you to go, you don't."

"Tell me to go? But you don't," said Willis.

"I do," said Cynthia, looking down.

"When? Now?" he demanded.

"Yes, now," she said, with her back to him and her hands clenched.

"Is I go" she heard him say slowly and deliberately behind her, "it will be for always, Cynthia."

"I don't care," was her reply.

"For

"For always, Cynthia," he repeated doggedly.

She shrugged her shoulders and turned a little towards him.

"You know you couldn't keep away," she said scornfully.

"You know you couldn't do without me," he rejoined, and began humming a tune.

"I have done without you for seven years."

"And a pretty mess you've got yourself into at the end of them," cried Willis.

"I haven't—it's you. It would have been all right if you had not interfered," she said, facing him again.

"Would it? Then I'm to go, is that it?" he said, and took no notice of her change of expression as he picked up his hat.

"It is for always, Cynthia," he said, and held out his hand.

Cynthia burst into tears.

"There, I *knew*," said Willis, coughing violently for no reason whatever.

"What did you know?" sobbed Cynthia, swaying towards him.

"That you would have to give in," he laughed, coming nearer to her.

"Why?" said she, struggling to free herself as he put his arms round her.

"Because I said so, of course. Bless me, is that going to displease you too?"

"I *hate* you for saying that, but—I'm glad you did," she whispered.—"I suppose I must ask you to dinner," she said presently.

"They will be all my dinners in the future," he said with exultation in his voice. "How will it please you to come to me for all your pocket-money, eh?"

"As

"As much, possibly, as it will please you to find out how much pocket-money I require," retorted Cynthia.

"To think," continued Willis, "that I owe all my happiness to that ridiculous poster——"

"You don't," cried Cynthia; "you owe it all to coming in this morning! I was writing to Adrian when you arrived. I should never have listened to him at all if you had not gone out of town. I am perfectly certain I shouldn't," she added firmly, in the hope of convincing herself of this comfortable conclusion. Willis had always been convinced of it, and kissed her with a proud sense of victory.

"Do you want me to go and finish him off, or anything?" he asked cheerfully.

Cynthia was alarmed at the vision of her late lover being murdered in his studio by one blow from a heavy walking-stick, and said she thought she would be meeting him herself at Lady Houghton's dance that evening. And she wondered vaguely at the same moment why he had not been to see her all day.

The reason for his absence was quite simple. He had woke up in the morning in a mood that strangely resembled Cynthia's, though it probably showed itself differently in him, and arose from another cause. He stayed in bed and blamed himself until mid-day; and he tried to paint and blamed his model until sunset. He called himself a fool in no measured terms for having allowed his feelings to run away with him, and he considered carefully every possible way of extricating himself from his predicament. The day wore on, and he arrived at no satisfactory solution of the difficulty. A letter did not commend itself to him because he could not write letters; women always had the best of it, he reflected, when it came to letter-writing. Besides, what had he

to

to say except that he found he had made a mistake on the previous evening? It was not a graceful admission to make in any case, but to say it in his best manner and in carefully chosen surroundings, satisfied his sense of the fitness of things more than the idea of seeing it baldly represented in black and white. Besides, he had really persuaded himself that he loved her very deeply, and he had a lingering hope that an interview might present some pathetic though compensating features that could never arise from an exchange of letters. Yet the evening came and he had not fixed a time nor a place for it.

He dined with Dicky Askew at his favourite restaurant; and the dinner was not so good as usual, and Dicky's conversation related entirely to Hurlingham and had a vagueness and an absence of particulars about it which, at any other time, would have aroused his suspicions, but which only succeeded this evening in irritating him more than before. He dressed for Lady Houghton's dance in a dejected frame of mind, and he went forth in a hansom like a victim who knows that his doom is awaiting him.

Margaret, with whom he had his first dance, found him astonishingly dull. She was full of conversation herself, and she rallied him on his mood as he led her into the conservatory after one or two turns round the crowded room.

"Why weren't you at Hurlingham this afternoon?" she said.

"Is it necessary to go to Hurlingham?" he asked with his weary smile. It struck him that she was looking very pretty and well-dressed.

"Of course. Everybody does," said Margaret conclusively, "it is bright and amusing, and the best-dressed people go there. There is polo too, I believe."

"But I am not interested in polo," objected Adrian.

"Oh, that doesn't matter. Nobody is. I didn't dream of

 looking

The Star and Garter, Richmond

By P. Wilson Steer

him! I thought you had; he doesn't understand! Where's auntie?"

And she fled across the tessellated floor and left the two friends face to face.

The ugly boy laughed exultantly.

"Thought you'd guess, old man, after what I said at dinner. Has she been trying to tell you, the little brick? She knows we're pals, you see, that's why."

"Yes," said Adrian faintly, "I expect that's why. Congratulate you, Dicky."

"Thanks awfully, old chap. I knew you'd be glad," laughed Dicky, shaking his hand vigorously; "I am beastly lucky, eh? See you for a drink after this dance."

Adrian stood irresolute for a moment when the ugly boy had gone. He picked one or two flowers to pieces, ground his heel savagely into them as they lay on the floor, and then strolled aimlessly round the edge of azalea under which he had been sitting with Margaret.

On the opposite side of it he found Mrs. Angelo Milton sitting alone.

There were only two constructions to be placed on the situation and he desperately assumed the happiest.

"Oh, here you are," he began, with a wretched attempt at composure; "I have been looking for you everywhere."

Cynthia looked him from head to foot without moving.

"I don't think I have the pleasure," she said, with a calm smile; "there seems to be some mistake."

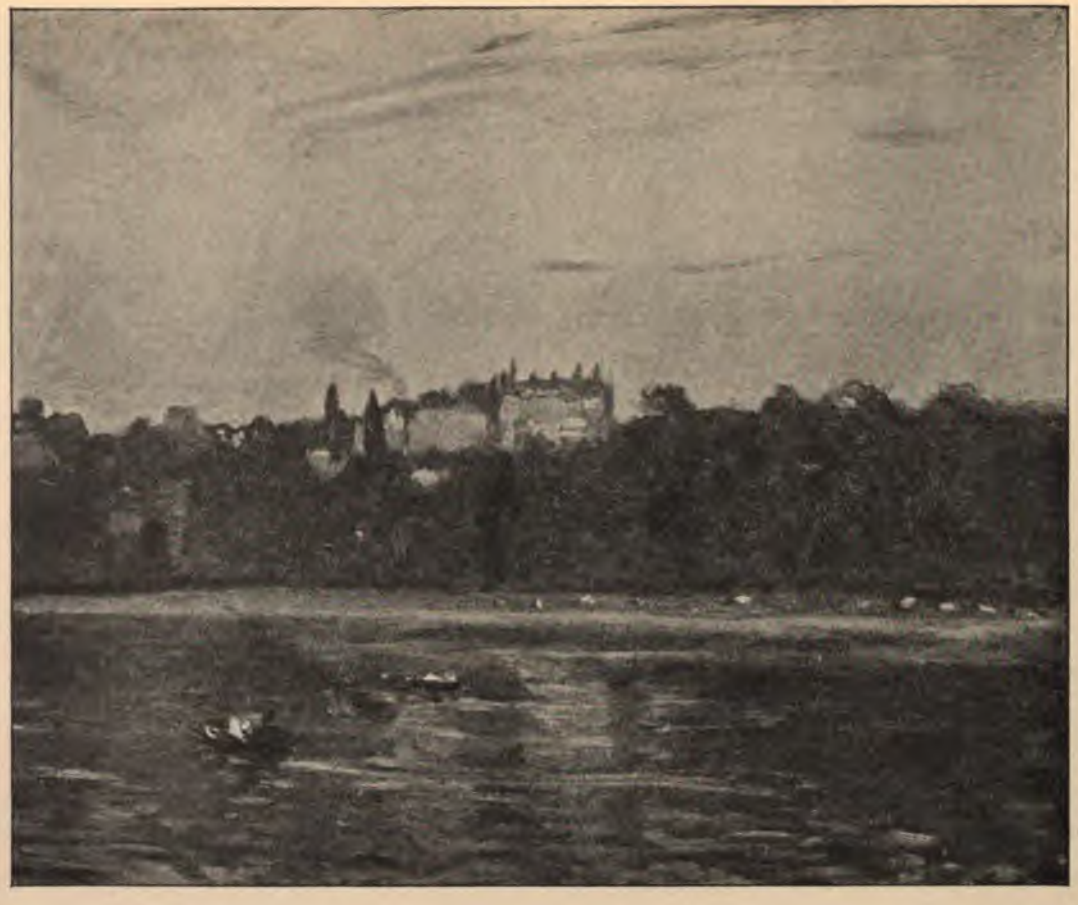
And Adrian took his dismissal and his departure simultaneously.

"Well, how did your puny little wall-painter take it?" asked Willis Ruthven the next day.

"He seemed surprised," said Cynthia, and concealed a smile.

The Star and Garter, Ri

By



An Appreciation of Ouida

By G. S. Street

I

THE superfluous champion is a foolish being, but his superfluity lies, as a rule, not in his cause, but in his selection of adversaries. In a world of compromises and transitions there is generally much to be said on both sides, and there are few causes or persons for whom a good word, in a fitting place and time, may not be spoken. I acquit myself of impertinence in stating what I find to like and to respect in the novels of Ouida. For many years, with many thousands of readers they have been popular, I know. But ever since I began to read reviews, to learn from the most reputable authorities what I should admire or avoid, I have found them mentioned with simple merriment or a frankly contemptuous patronage. One had, now and then in boyhood, vague ideas of being cultivated, vague aspirations towards superiority : I thought, for my part, that of the many insuperable obstacles in the way of this goal, this contempt of Ouida's novels was one of the most obvious. I enjoyed them as a boy, and I enjoy them now ; I place them far above books whose praise is in all critics' mouths, and I think I have reason for the faith that is in me.

One may write directly of "Ouida" as of a familiar institution, without, I hope, an appearance of bad manners, using the pseudonym for the books as a whole. The faults alleged against her are a commonplace of criticism: it is said that her men and her women are absurd, that her style is bad, that her sentiment is crude or mawkish. It is convenient to make those charges points of departure for my championship.

II

Everybody has laughed at Ouida's typical guardsman, that magnificent creature of evil life and bitter memories, sumptuous, reckless, and prepared withal to perform heroic feats of physical strength at a moment's notice. Nobody, I admit, has met a guardsman like him; I admit his prodigality to be improbable in its details, and the insolence of his manners to be deplorable. But if you can keep from your mind the unlikenesses of his superficial life, you come upon an ideal which is no doubt falsely elaborated, but which, too, is the reverse of despicable. With all his faults, Ouida's guardsman is a man, and a man of a recognisably large nature. The sort of man whom Ouida has set out to express in him, often with unhappy results, is a man of strong passions and a zeal for life. He grasps at the pleasures of life, and is eager for all its activities; he will endure privations in the cause of sport and discomforts in the cause of friendship and risks in the cause of love. His code of honour may not keep him out of the Divorce Court, but, except in that connection, it saves him from lying and trickery. His social philosophy, that of the essential male in a position of advantage, is not enlightened, and his sense of humour is elementary; but his habit of life is clean and active; he is ready to fight, and he

he does not swagger. His one affectation is, that if by chance he has done something great in the ways of sport or war, he looks as if nothing had happened. There are things in life which he puts before the main chance. Such, more or less, is the sort of man in question, virile certainly, and one whom only the snobbery of intellect can despise. His is not a very common type in a materialised age, when even men of pleasure want their pleasure, as it were, at store prices, and everybody is climbing pecuniary and social ladders; it is a type that, I confess, I respect and like. At least it is indisputable that such men have done much for our country. Now Ouida, as I have admitted, has made many mistakes in her dealings with this type of man: who has altogether avoided them? They are many who find the pictures of him in Mr. Rudyard Kipling, superficially at least, far inferior to Mr. Kipling's "natives," and his three immortal Tommies. Ouida has made him ridiculously lavish, inclined to translate his genuine emotions into terms of sentimentalism, and to say things of his social inferiors which such a man may sometimes think, but is careful not to say. To affirm that the subject is good and the treatment of it bad, would be to give my case away. My contention is that the treatment, with many imperfections, leaves one assured that the subject has been, in essentials, perceived.

But her guardsman belongs to Ouida's earlier manner, and it is most unfair, in estimating her, to forget that this manner has been mellowed and quieted. In "Princess Napraxine" and in "Othmar"—the two most notable books, I think, of her later period—there are types of men more reasonably conceived and expressed more subtly. Geraldine, the cosmopolitan, but characteristic Englishman; Napraxine, the amiable, well-bred savage; Des Vannes, the calculating sensualist; Othmar himself, the disappointed idealist, these are painted, now and then, in somewhat glaring

glaring colours, but you cannot deny the humanity of the men or the effectiveness of their portraits. And when you remember how few are the male creations of women-writers which are indubitable men, you must in reason give credit to Ouida for her approximation.

I submit that it is not an absolute condemnation to say of Ouida's women that they are "hateful." There are critics, I know, who deny by implication the right of an author to draw any character which is not good and pleasant. That there may be, at one time or another, too pronounced a tendency to describe only people who are wicked or unpleasant, to the neglect of those who are sane and healthy and reputable, is certain; but the critics should remember that there is no great author of English fiction who has limited himself to these. One may regret that any writer should ignore them, but only stupidity or malevolence refuses to such a writer what credit may be due to him for what he has done, because of what he has left undone. Of Ouida's women much the same, *mutatis mutandis*, may be said, as has been said so often of Thackeray's: the good women are simpletons or obtuse, only the wicked women interesting. That criticism of Thackeray has always seemed to me to be remarkably crude, even for a criticism: it argues surely a curious ignorance of life or lack of charity to deny any "goodness" to Beatrix Esmond or Ethel Newcome. But of Ouida it is tolerably fair. There *is* an air of stupidity about her good and self-sacrificing women, and since there is nobody, not incredibly unfortunate, but has known women good in the most conventional sense, and self-sacrificing, and wise and clever as well, it follows that Ouida has not described the whole of life. But perhaps she has not tried so to do. It is objected occasionally, even against a short story, that its "picture of life" is so-and-so,

and

and far more plausibly can it be objected against a long tale of novels: but I have a suspicion that some of the writers so incriminated have not attempted the large task attributed to them. Granted, then, that Ouida has not put all the women in the world into her novels: what of those she has?

Certainly her best-drawn women are hateful: are they also absurd? I think they are not. They are over-emphasised beyond doubt, so much so, sometimes, that they come near to being merely an abstract quality—greed, belike, or animal passion—clothed carelessly in flesh. To be that is to be of the lowest class of characters in fiction, but they are never quite that. A side of their nature may be presented alone, but its presentation is not such as to exclude, as in the other case, what of that nature may be left. And, after all, there have been women—or the chroniclers lie sadly—in whom greed and passion seem to have excluded most else. The critics may not have met them, but Messalina and Barbara Villiers, and certain ladies of the Second Empire, whose histories Ouida seems to have studied, have lived all the same, and it is reasonable to suppose that a few such are living now. One may be happy in not knowing them, in the sphere of one's life being too quiet and humdrum for their gorgeous presence, but one hears of such women now and then.

They are not, I think, absurd in Ouida's presentment, but I confess they are not attractive. One's general emotion with regard to them is regret that nobody was able to score off or discomfit them in some way. And that, it seems, was the intention of their creator. She writes with a keenly pronounced bias against them, she seeks to inform you how vile and baneful they are. It is not a large-hearted attitude, and some would say it is not artistic, but it is one we may easily understand and with which in a measure we may sympathise. A novel is not a sermon,

sermon, but *sæva indignatio* is generally a respectable quality. I am not trying to prove that Ouida's novels are very strict works of art: I am trying to express what from any point of view may be praised in them. In this instance I take Ouida to be an effective preacher. She is enraged with these women because of men, worth better things, who are ruined by them, or because of better women for them discarded. It would have been more philosophical to rail against the folly of the men, and were Ouida a man, the abuse of the women might be contemptible—I have never been able to admire the attitude of the honest yeoman towards Lady Clara Vere de Vere; but she is a woman, and "those whom the world loved well, putting silver and gold on them," one need not pity for her scourging. It is effective. She is concerned to show you the baseness and meanness possible to a type of woman: at her best she shows you them naturally, analysing them in action; often her method is, in essentials, simple denunciation, a preacher's rather than a novelist's; but the impression is nearly always distinct. You may be incredulous of details in speech or action, but you have to admit that, given the medium, and the convention, a fact of life is brought home with vigour to your sympathies and antipathies. You must allow the convention—the convention between you and the temperament of your author. As when in parts of Byron a theatrical bent in his nature, joined with a mode of his time, gives you expressions that on first appearance are not real, not sincere, you may prove a fine taste by your dislike, but you prove a narrow range of feeling and a poor imagination if you get beyond it; so I venture to think in this matter of Ouida's guardsman and her wicked women, the magnificence, the high key, the glaring colours may offend or amuse you, but they should not render you blind to the humanity that is below the first appearance.

And if the hateful women are unattractive, is there not in the atmosphere that surrounds their misdeeds something—now and again, just for a minute or two—vastly and vaguely agreeable? I speak of the atmosphere as I suppose it to be, not as idealised in Ouida's fashion. It is not the atmosphere, I should imagine, of what in the dear old snobbish phrase was called "high life"—gay here and there, but mostly ordered and decorous: there is too much ignored. It is the atmosphere, really, of a profuse Bohemianism, of mysterious little houses, of comical lavishness, and unwisdom, and intrigue. I do not pretend—as one did in boyhood—to know anything about it save as a reader of fiction, but there are moments when, in the quiet country or after a day's hard work in one's garret, the thought of such an atmosphere is pleasant. We—we others, the plodders and timid livers—could not live in it; better ten hours a day in a bank and a dinner of cold mutton; but fancy may wander in it agreeably for a brief time, and I am grateful to Ouida for its suggestion.

III

I do not propose to discourse at length on Ouida's style. As it is, I do not admire it much. But I cannot see that it is worse than the average English in the novels and newspapers of the period. It is crude, slap-dash if you will, incorrect at times. But it is eloquent, in its way. It does not seem to have taken Swift for an ideal; it is not simple, direct, restrained. But it is expressive, and it is so easy to be crude, and slap-dash, and incorrect, and with it all to express nothing. There are many writers who are more correct than Ouida, and very many indeed who are a hundred times less forcible, and (to my taste) less tolerable

tolerable to read. It may be true that to know fully the savour and sense of English, and to use it as one having that knowledge, a writer must be a scholar. I do not suppose that Ouida is a scholar, but I am sure that the scholarship that is only just competent to get a familiar quotation aright is not a very valuable possession. In fine, I respect an unrestrained and incorrect eloquence more than a merely correct and periphrastic nothingness. I would not take Ouida's for a model of style, but I prefer it to some others with which I am acquainted.

Perhaps to be a good judge of sentiment one should not be an easy subject for its influence. In that case nothing I can say on the question of Ouida's sentiment can be worth much, for I am the prey of every sort of sentiment under heaven. If I belonged to a race whose males wept more readily than those of my own, I should be in a perpetual state of tears. Any of the recognised forms of pathos affects me with certainty, so it be presented without (as is sometimes the case) an overpowering invitation to hilarity. In these days, however, if one does not insist on sentiment all day long, if one has moods when some other emotion is agreeable, if one is not prepared to accept every profession for an achievement of pathos, one is called a "cynic." At times the pathos of Ouida has amused me, and I too was a cynic. But, as a rule, I think it genuine. Despised love, unmerited misfortunes, uncongenial surroundings—she has used all these motives with effect. The favourite pathos of her earlier books, that of the man who lives in a whirl of pleasure with a "broken heart," appeals very easily to a frivolous mood, and may be made ridiculous to anybody by a touch, but its contrasts may be used with inevitable effect, and so Ouida has sometimes used them. Dog-like fidelity, especially to a worthless man or woman, can be ridiculous to the coarse-grained only. Love of beauty unattainable, as of the country in one condemned

condemned to a sordid life in a town, can hardly be made absurd. But the mere fact of unrequited affection, being so very common, requires more than a little talent to be impressive, even to a sentimentalist, in a novel, and Ouida, I think, has made this common fact impressive over and over again, because, however imperfect be the expression, the feeling, being real, appeals without fail to a sympathetic imagination.

IV

The two qualities, I think, which underlie the best of Ouida's work, and which must have always saved it from commonness, are a genuine and passionate love of beauty, as she conceives it, and a genuine and passionate hatred of injustice and oppression. The former quality is constantly to be found in her, in her descriptions —accurate or not—of the country, in her scorn of elaborate ugliness as contrasted with homely and simple seemliness, in her railings against all the hideous works of man. It is not confined to physical beauty. Love of liberty, loyalty, self-sacrifice—those moral qualities which, *pace* the philosophers, must in our present stage of development seem beautiful to us—she has set herself to show us their beauty without stint of enthusiasm. Nobody can read her tales of Italian peasant life without perceiving how full is her hatred of inhumanity and wrong. In a book of essays recently published by her this love and hatred have an expression which in truth is not always judicious, but is not possibly to be mistaken. They are qualities which, I believe, are sufficiently rare in contemporary writers to deserve our attention and gratitude.

In fine, I take the merits in Ouida's books to balance their faults many times over. They are not finished works of art, they do not approach that state so nearly as hundreds of books with a hundred

hundred times less talent spent on them. Her faults, which are obvious, have brought it about that she is placed, in the general estimation of critics, below writers without a tenth of her ability. I should be glad if my appreciation may suggest to better critics than myself better arguments than mine for reconsidering their judgment.

Justice

By Richard Garnett, LL.D., C.B.

WHEN Deities from earth departute made,
Justice I marked in attitude to soar ;
No bandage veiled her eyes ; no blade she bore ;
Nor from her hand her wonted balance swayed.
" Goddess," I cried, with tongue and heart dismayed,
" Bereft of thee and thine, how any more
Shall Grief be stilled ? or Faith with Hope adore ?
Wrong be annulled ? or Benefit repaid ? "

" Fear not," she said, " though far I seem to wend
Who omnipresent am, and whose award
Hath course by automatic Law sublime ;
My bandage blinds the vulgar ; on my sword
The malefactor falls ; my scales depend
In nicest balance from the hand of Time."

Lilla

Conte de neige pour mon neveu Rudi

Par le Prince Bojidar Karageorgevitch

Elle était partie la petite Lilla, et Hélo savait qu'elle était partie pour toujours.

Aussi lorsqu'au dernier tournant de la route, là bas, très loin, où le lac finit, il n'avait plus vu le petit nuage d'or des cheveux de Lilla briller sur le rouge de la carriole qui emportait la petite fille, Hélo s'était senti comme sans son cœur, et s'était mis à errer longtemps, longtemps.

Un à un il avait repris tous les sentiers parcourus avec la chère absente, il avait revu toutes les places où elle s'était reposée, s'était arrêté devant les buissons qui tant de fois, les premiers jours, avaient déchiré ses claires robes de princesse . . . .

Lilla était venue un matin, amenée par sa mère, qui, pour la convalescence de l'enfant, cherchait loin des villes, dans les montagnes du Jemtland, où les été sont une éternelle limpidité d'aurore, l'air pur, ordonné par les médecins à la petite malade.

La maison des parents de Hélo, plantée seule au bord du lac, tout rouge, l'air presque d'un joujou avec son petite balcon et son toit surplombant l'eau, avait séduit la voyageuse, et elle s'était décidée à y rester jusqua'à la complète guérison de sa fille.

Lilla

Lilla avait pour ses jeux et ses promenades un petit compagnon en Hélo.

Suédois tous deux, les enfants parlaient la même langue, lui avec l'accent lent et guttural des gens de la montagne, la petite fille avec le martellement, pressé un peu, des gens de ville, et Hélo ravi l'écoutait pour sa jolie musique de voix sans souvent comprendre les paroles . . . .

De suite les enfants avaient été amis.

La pâle et frêle petite fille, toute délicate de sa longue maladie, semblait à Hélo une des fées du lac auxquelles il pensait les soirs de clair de lune, et lui charmait la petite Lil'a par sa jolie fraicheur, ses joues de santé, et la vérité de ses grands yeux verts.

Les enfants se parlaient peu. Dès le premier jour après s'être dit leurs noms, ils étaient restés assis en silence, l'un à côté de l'autre, un long temps à regarder le lac, et là bas, tout là bas, dans le bleu du loin, les pics recouverts de neige.

Au premier regard ils s'étaient compris, et les paroles, pour eux, ne pouvaient guère ajouter à ce que savaient leurs âmes.

Ils se promenaient ensemble. Hélo quelquefois rapportait d'une longue excursion Lilla toute fatiguée, si faible encore . . . .

Puis, un jour, des couleurs se mirent à ses joues ; les fraises qu'elle mangeait dans les bois ne faisaient plus une tache rouge sur ses lèvres, et peu à peu elle ressemblait à Hélo, gagnant son joli air de fraicheur.

Les légères robes de la ville avaient été déchirées aux ronces des sentiers, et un matin Hélo vit apparaître Lilla vêtue en petite paysanne, coiffée d'un bonnet bleu à trois pièces, le court corsage tout brodé, au dessus de la jupe sombre, coupée du tablier multicolore.

Et telle, elle lui semblait sienne. Il lui avait pris la main pour la première fois . . . . et en s'en allant vers le bois il l'avait tutoyée.

Maintenant

Maintenant que la santé était revenue à la petite fille, les enfants faisaient la journée entière de longues excursions, les ascensions de toutes les montagnes environnantes, et Hélo, tout fier, montrait à sa petite amie son libre domaine planté de sapins, et où des fleurs pâles comme des pétales de lune mettaient leurs taches claires sur le lourd tapis des mousses.

A la fin de juillet, la mère de Lilla avait décidé le départ pour le dimanche prochain . . . .

Hélo avait passé le dernier jour entier près de Lilla, puis lorsqu'elle fut couchée, il était monté sur un inaccessible pic lui cueillir un bouquet de roses de neige.

Et avec les fleurs dans les mains, semblable à quelque petite fée des bois, toute rose de la santé revenue, elle lui avait envoyé un baiser du haut de la voiture, puis elle s'était éloignée, éloignée . . . . et là bas, au tournant du lac, elle venait de disparaître et Hélo savait qu'il ne la reverrait plus . . . .

Hélo n'avait pas pleuré, aussi bien il sentait qu'il lui aurait fallu pleurer toujours, car jamais il ne pourrait oublier Lilla, jamais se consoler de ne plus la voir.

Et les soirs de lune, il s'asseyait devant la maison, sur le petit banc où le premier jour ils étaient restés ensemble, puis doucement il chantait et sa voix claire montait dans l'air pur, vibrait à l'écho lointain et s'unissait à l'harmonie de la nuit.

Puis presque subitement vint l'hiver. Un matin Hélo vit toute la campagne blanche de son calme tapis de neige. Et de ne plus reconnaître "leurs" sentiers, de ne plus voir "leurs" buissons, la grande tache verte là haut de la pelouse où ils s'asseyaient tous deux pour tresser des fleurs, Lilla lui avait paru comme plus lointaine, partie dans un au-delà insaisissable à jamais.

Et par les sentiers, dans les clairières, sur le pic tant élevé qu'ils avaient

avaient regardé ensemble, partout sur la neige, Hélo traçait le nom qui était dans son cœur, écrivait Lilla, Lilla, Lilla . . . .

Puis il retournait aux endroits où il avait gravé dans la neige le nom chéri. Le vent insensiblement effaçait les lettres. Des empreintes d'écureuils brodaient des arabesques tout autour, parfois emportaient une moitié du mot . . . . et l'enfant recommençait, écrivait à nouveau aux mêmes places. Lilla, Lilla, Lilla . . . .

Hélo vivait son souvenir, inconsolable, insensible à tout ce qui n'était pas sa pensée, comme absent, toujours en idée près de Lilla, loin de ses camarades dont il ne partageait plus les jeux, loin de ses parents tout tristes de son immense chagrin, désolés de le voir pâlir tous les jours davantage . . . .

Et le sombre hiver s'éclaircit ; de la pluie tomba, puis la brume voila longtemps l'horizon, enfin dans le soleil reparu la neige acheva de fondre. Les ruisseaux reprirent leur babil, et tous portant la neige sur laquelle le nom était tracé, chantaient : Lilla, Lilla, Lilla : mais chantaient si doucement qu' Hélo seul pouvait entendre leur murmure.

Avec le printemps les oiseaux et les fleurs aussi revinrent. Tout chantait autour de la petite cabane rouge ; les mousses de nouveau s'étoilaient de fleurs pâles sous les grands sapins sombres, et Hélo, toujours errant, meurtri de souvenir, était pâle maintenant, pâle lui aussi comme les délicats pétales éclos au soleil du Nord.

* * *

La lune se levait dans le ciel bleu, profondément bleu, tout diamanté d'étoiles. Les ruisseaux brillaient discrètement parmi les buissons, disaient Lilla, Lilla, Lilla, en se dépêchant vers le lac, et Hélo entendait le nom aimé, écoutait au loin comme un froissement

froissement de grelots lui semblait-il : la voiture peut-être qui la ramenait . . . .

Un chant d'oiseau s'éleva dans le silence, deux notes douces et tendres comme l'air de la nuit, répétaient Lilla, Lilla . . . . puis des branches de sapin s'embrassèrent dans la brise du soir, et elles aussi chuchottèrent Lilla . . . .

Hélo revenait de la montagne, marchait vers le lac, et lorsqu'il fut au bord il vit sur l'eau un large tapis d'or que la lune y étendait, un tapis qui veloutait la route vers là bas . . . . là bas où l'oiseau appelait Lilla, Lilla, où les sapins baisaient le nom chéri, où les ruisseaux couraient le porter . . . . où peut-être elle était. . . . .

Et au bord du lac des roseaux se froissaient, leurs longues feuilles de soie murmurant Lilla, Lilla. . . . .

Hélo se pencha vers eux, écouta, et c'était si doux la musique qu'il leur entendait, puis le tapis d'or l'appelait, et comme un reproche, plus éloigné maintenant, il entendit l'oiseau Lilla, Lilla . . Lilla . . . . alors il s'avança sur le tapis de lune . . . . et disparut.

* * * * *

Jamais le lac ne rendit le petit corps frêle, les pâles joues de fleurs, les grands yeux verts tout pensifs de l'image aimée . . . . Et seulement pour que les parents puissent prier à la place où Hélo avait disparu, des nénuphars, des iris et des myosotis poussèrent près des roseaux, formant une tombe de fleurs au dessus de l'enfant qui dormait son dernier sommeil, bercé par les ruisseaux chantant à jamais Lilla, Lilla, Lilla. . . . .



The Screen

By Sir William Eden, Bart.

In an American Newspaper Office

By Charles Miner Thompson

I

HUNT was the night-editor of the respectable *Dawn*. This knowing journal declared that "business men desire a newspaper which they can take home to their families," and, with the immodest confidence of virtue, asserted that it "filled this long-felt want." Its columns were carefully kept unspotted from sensational crime. It was edited with the most solicitous regard for the proprieties. Its proofs were reported to be read by Mrs. Grundy herself. "The duty of the press," said the *Dawn*, "is to conserve the public morals. The editor, with a high ideal of the function of journalism, will not follow the almost universal and highly regrettable fashion of the times, and sacrifice decency to dollars." This truly disinterested paper sacrificed indecency on the same altar, without a blush, and, with a pride that aped humility, posed as the Dawn of a Better Day. By the same token, Hunt occupied a position of eminence.

When he reached the editorial rooms in the evening he usually found Master, his assistant, already seated at the big night-desk hard at work. Hunt had not been so many years in existence, as Master had been in journalism; and his superiority in rank made his

his senior sulky. A grumpy "hello" was all the greeting he ever got. That so old a man should "play baby" struck Hunt as comic, and his subordinate's grudging welcome was become an enjoyment which through force of indulgence he unconsciously demanded. Therefore, to-night, when on coming into the office he found Master's chair empty he felt vaguely aggrieved. He thought of himself, charitably, as missing the elder man: what he did actually miss was the agreeable fillip which the spectacle of the old man's glumness always gave his sense of humour.

Perhaps, however, his indefinite feeling of discomfort was due in part to the cheerless aspect of the room. Usually when he entered the place it was lighted and occupied; to-night no one was about, and the one gas jet that was burning showed a mere tooth of flame within its wire muzzle. The little closets of the reporters, each with a desk and a chair in it, which were ranged like so many doorless state-rooms against the sides of the apartment, appeared dimly in the gloom as black, uncanny holes. On the fourth side, under the gaslight and covered with a disorderly array of shears, pencils, bottles of mucilage, and of ink, pens and paper, was the big and battered night-desk. Recognisable above it by persons unhappily familiar with such objects, were the electric messenger call and fire alarm. Higher still, there perched in solitary state upon a shelf a dusty and dented gas-meter. The dirty floor was littered with rumpled and torn newspapers, splotched with tobacco juice, and strewn with the ends of cigars and cigarettes. Nauseating black beetles scampered everywhere, lurked in corners and cracks, and rustled in the papers. Five were drinking from the inkstand. The atmosphere was heavy with the odours of damp paper, printer's ink, and stale tobacco. "Such," reflected Hunt with grim humour, "is the golden East from which appears the worshipped *Dawn*."

Hunt,

Hunt, however, was too thoroughly accustomed to the rooms and too indifferent to dirt to be much or long depressed by them. Having turned up the gas, he took off both his coat and his waistcoat, for the close office was already uncomfortably warm. Yet it was bitterly cold without, as became the last night of a March most lion-like in its departure. Then from his soiled shirt he removed the perfectly clean and highly polished collar and cuffs. For neat keeping he placed these in the same drawer in which he stored his tobacco. Thence he drew forth the next moment a big briar-wood pipe. Having first regarded this companion of his nights with much affection, and rubbed the bowl against his nose to bring out the colour, he proceeded to fill it with tobacco, which he pressed down with a finely solicitous little finger, and lighted with deep satisfaction. As the first great puffs of smoke made vague his features, he threw away the match with a superb disregard of the inflammable piles of paper on the floor, and settled himself with some show of heartiness to his work.

He was a small fellow, and young. His black hair, cut in the style termed "pompadour," stood up over his forehead like the bristles of a blacking-brush. His small black eyes darted alertly everywhere and were full of humour. His tip-tilted nose seemed at some time to have been used as a handle for raising his upper lip, which was short and showed his teeth. His whole appearance was odd and saucy; you judged him knowing, cynical, and amusing, and smiled upon him at once with amusement and expectation. His nervous strength, which you saw at once was immense, was as yet unexhausted by a life divided between severe mental toil and vicious pleasure. From half-past seven in the evening until four in the morning he was at the office of the *Dawn*. Then he went to his lodging-house, there to sleep until twelve o'clock. The afternoon he passed at the Press Club—

smoking,

smoking, drinking, playing cards or billiards—and after dinner repaired again to the office. His Sundays were spent partly in sleep, partly in dissipation. He had taken a degree at one of the smaller American colleges, had a considerable knowledge of English literature, and was ambitious to write for the stage. He was the son of a country deacon.

He was looking through the foreign news in the evening paper with a view to the fabrication of "special cablegrams" to the morrow's *Dawn*, when Burress, a reporter, entered.

"Hello," he said, "where's the old man?"

"Dunno," answered Hunt without looking up from his work; "drunk probably."

"I thought he'd kept pretty straight since he came here," said Burress.

"He has," retorted Hunt. "That's why I think he's drunk."

Burress laughed. He stepped to the desk for light by which to read the letter and the assignment he had found in his box. Gloom overspread his vacuous face when he found that his assignment was to a meeting of some scientific club or other, and required a long, disagreeable journey to the opposite end of the town. Having shoved the clipping into his pocket in disgust, he cocked his cigar in the corner of his mouth, half closed his eyes to keep the smoke out of them, and began opening his letter with the assistant night-editor's shears. His unbuttoned ulster hanging open in front, revealed the shabby clothes beneath. The overcoat itself, however, was comparatively new, and together with the loud "puff" tie, the high silk hat, and the shoes of patent leather which he wore, enabled him to present upon the street a delusive appearance of smartness. The few inches of trouser-leg which were visible beneath the long coat, were the Achilles' heel of this dandy, and worried him at times.

Master's

"Master's got a letter from the boss in his box," said he, significantly. As he spoke he tore up his own letter (which was a bill) and threw the pieces on the floor.

Hunt glanced at him keenly. "Has he?" he asked with interest.

"Yes," said Burress, and the two exchanged understanding glances.

"Well," said Hunt crossly, "I expected it. What else was that kid Wilson put on the day-desk for?"

"He'll succeed him, will he?"

"Of course," replied Hunt. "And a pretty time I'll have breaking him in, too. As if I hadn't got enough to do as it is!"

"Pretty tough on the old man, I call it," remarked Burress, idly sympathetic.

"What do you expect in this office?" asked Hunt sarcastically. "Life tenure, high wages, and service pensions? Do you take the boss for an angel? There isn't any angel in journalism—except possibly the one that does the recording. The old man gets precious little; but Wilson'll get less, see? 'The golden exhalations' of this dawn ain't used up in salaries—not to any great extent."

"D——n him," said Burress. This seemingly irrelevant curse was directed against the proprietor. As becomes a conventional expression of an emotion the edge of which habit has dulled, it was delivered without animation. Hunt paid no attention to it, and the reporter, even as he gave it forth, picked up the shears again and began idly to clean his nails. "How'll the old man take it, I wonder," he said at length meditatively.

"Oh, he'll get drunk now, sure."

"Fearful wreck, ain't he," said Burress appreciatively.

"Yes, and he's cracked too," growled the night editor, bending himself over some copy.

"I was

"I was talking to old Symonds the other day about him," continued the reporter. "He said he used to be the best newspaper man in the city—managing editor of the *Atlas* once, you know. Guess he was pretty lively too—great on practical jokes, Symonds said."

"Humph," grunted Hunt, "a cab-horse is merry beside him now. But he knows his business just the same," he added, thinking ruefully of Wilson.

"He played a great joke on Fox once—Fox of the *Atlas*," continued Burress, snapping the shears together definitively, and taking on the air of one about to tell a long tale which he thinks amusing. "Symonds told me about it. It's a devilish good story. He said he——"

But here the large form of the old man himself appearing in the doorway, caused Burress to stop in the middle of his phrase. "Hello, Master," said he, in some confusion. Hunt also looked up, noted that his fat and elderly assistant had not been drinking, and nodded briefly. Master, avoiding the younger men's eyes, in which he perceived and resented the curiosity, growled an answering "hello." He hung up his shabby overcoat, coat and waistcoat, and for his greater comfort let his braces fall about his vast hips. Then standing by the desk he opened and read the note he had found in his box. The two young men watched him furtively.

Master was large and grossly fat. His face, which looked as if moulded from damp newspaper, was deeply wrinkled; his eyes were dull and heavily ringed with dark circles; and his flaccid cheeks hung about his jaws like dewlaps. What little hair there was about the sides of his head was unkempt and dirty. His crown was completely bald. This condition Hunt made the topic of endless jokes. "What I like about you, Master," he would say, "is that you have the courage of your baldness. *You* don't

don't cultivate an isthmus of hair to adorn a forehead and define a brow. You leave everything frank and open. But never you mind, old man, always remember that 'beauty draws us by a single hair.'" Another time the nearness of Master's oily pate and tallow-like face to the gas jet led Hunt with unkind whimsicality to congratulate him on not having a wick in the top of his head. "If you had," he said, "you'd burn out like a candle, sure." The old man's whole body, moreover, looked weak, as if force of habit rather than a solid framework of bone held its flabby mass in place. He was at the same time repugnant and pathetic.

As he ended his reading, he turned for a moment an expressionless gaze upon the young men. Then, crumpling the letter and setting it aflame at the gas jet, he lit his pipe with it, let it burn almost to his fingers, dropped it at just the right moment, and carefully stamped out the blaze upon the floor. "I got a letter to-day," he said apathetically, "saying my old mother is dead, and to-night I get the G. B. [Grand Bounce; *Anglice*, the sack] here. What's the news with you fellows?"

"Nothing much," answered Hunt, startled and uncertain.

"That's pretty tough," said Burress weakly. Master grunted, and the reporter, much embarrassed, made a clumsy escape: "Well," said he, "I've got to be going. By-bye. See you later."

The old man seated himself opposite Hunt at the night-desk. He spread his big thighs wide apart and his great stomach settled between them like a half-filled sack in a corner. His sometime clean shirt exhaled a faint odour of perspiration, had tobacco-spots upon its rumpled bosom, and clung about his shoulders in a multitude of fine wrinkles. A greasy "string-tie" of rusty black hung disconsolate ends from under a soiled collar. His pear-

 shaped

shaped face, looking more than usually battered and worn, fairly exuded melancholy. He mopped his bald head mechanically, and then stared a moment with dull eyes at the crumpled handkerchief in his pudgy fist. Finally pulling himself together, he began to work—well and rapidly, but with entire unconsciousness.

The office grew livelier. Reporters came in, chatted among themselves a while, or wrote busily in their closets, and departed again into the night. The regular procession of disreputable-looking boys began to file into the room with telegraphic despatches from the Associated Press. "Copy" in ever-increasing volume was flung upon the night-desk. Hunt, with a calculating eye upon the space of the paper gave the order sharply to "carve hell out of everything." Thereupon some one began to chant a rhyme current in the office:

> "O'er the films Associated,
> In a tone by no means bated,
> Comes the cry reiterated,
> Carve, Master, carve!"

The managing editor, emerging every now and then from his den, like a bulldog from his kennel, swore viciously at Hunt, at Master, at whatever reporters happened to be there. On all sides rose the mingled noise of laughter, oaths, whistling, sharp question and sharper answer, striking matches, scratching pens, grating chairs, scuffling feet, the sharp snipping of shears through copy, and their clatter when thrown down, the ringing of the bell of the copy-box, the rattle of the box itself as it moved up and down in its narrow passage-way to the composing-room, the tearing of paper, the devil's tattoo of a typewriter; but though he heard it Master was conscious of none of it. To the general hubbub, the fire alarm added its deliberate strokes, like a clock. As it ceased,

ceased, the inattentive "night locals" asked what box it was. Master answered him—correctly. Yet he was unconscious of the striking bell, of the question, of his own answer, and in this curious state, known to all who have been stunned by sudden misfortune, in which the mind, though it seems occupied wholly with its sense of leaden sorrow, still does its usual, familiar task, Master worked on through the evening.

What he was conscious of was his misery. Its dull ache was in his brain, which it numbed, and in his body, which felt heavy and weak. His future was black. The metaphor is outworn; but the darkness which it has ceased to make visible to our accustomed imagination was palpable to him. In the night you see dimly, perhaps not at all; but you know where your path is leading, you know that familiar and well-loved objects—trees, hills, the houses of men—are about you, that your home is before you, that the ground is firm under your feet. Not more dark than this is the future of most of us. But imagine yourself set down in a spacious blackness of which you know nothing, where the first step may hurl you into an infinite abyss or bring you full against some slimy wall, the horrid breadth and height of which are illimitable; where, finally, what you stand upon is neither turf nor stone, hillside nor plain, private path nor public way, but mysterious unnameable ooze. In such a place Master was now set down.

Hard as his lot had been before, now it was harder. While his old mother lived—a withered yet active dame, to think prim, small thoughts in a prim, small house, far away from him, in the pure country—his life, wrecked as he knew it to be, had still its worthy use. By an arrangement with the cashier a part of his pay each Saturday was safely sent to her: with the lesser remaining portion he began his weekly ruinous carouse. Now that she was dead—and he had a vision of her still face, with its air of demanding nothing,

nothing, which, to the living, with love still to bestow, is the most painful sight in the faces of the dead—what had he for which to live? With what, indeed, was he to live? He was discharged —abruptly, cruelly, without notice. And he knew too well he could not obtain work elsewhere. The thrifty proprietor of the *Dawn*, who had hired him simply because, no one else wanting him, he was cheap, might indeed find him useful for a time; but no editor willing to pay the honest price of capable and faithful service would for a moment consider any request for employment from him.

In one direction only was there light. Tunnelled through the darkness as through black stone, and lighted with cruel distinctness, there stretched a pathway. He saw himself going down this way —first, a worn-out journalist doing odds and ends of "space work" for a scanty and intermittent wage; next, a drunken sot spending his days partly in public parks, partly in shrinking visits to public-houses, his nights in police stations; and finally, when dead, tossed into the earth so sodden and diseased a corpse that even the gorge of grave-worms would rise at him. And though the darkness was heartening in comparison with this hideous, inevitable path, the eyes of his inward vision fixed themselves upon it, fascinated. His bodily eyes meanwhile read "copy"—drunks, petty larcenies, fires, aldermanic doings, a ball, a dinner in fashionable society— and his blue pencil marked this copy with paragraph-marks, struck out superfluous passages, and wrote appropriate "heads."

At this moment Burress entered, flushed and excited. "There, by George!" he exclaimed, throwing a bundle of copy down before Master, "here's news for you. That's better than your scientific meeting, I guess!"

"What is it?" said Hunt.

"A column suicide!" exclaimed Burress with pride. "I stumbled

stumbled upon it in the luckiest manner. I was at the hotel when——"

The word "suicide" pierced Master's unconsciousness like a bright sword. He was oblivious to the rest. Burress's copy was the first to which he gave his whole mind. It was an account of the suicide of a man who seemed to have everything needful to make him happy—reputation, namely, and wealth, a handsome, accomplished wife and promising children. "No cause," ran the reporter's conventional phrase, "can be assigned for the rash act." If this man had found life a vain thing, what, he asked, could it hold of good for him? And the idea of suicide, once suggested to him, grew and waxed strong and became a resolve. Then, suddenly, self-disgust seized him. What good resolution, he asked himself savagely, had ever been kept by him? He was weak, he was a coward, he would never have the nerve——

As he pondered this other man's obituary, he wondered in bitterness of spirit what the account of his own death would be—brief, he knew, and good-natured, but in every line, he foresaw, breathing contempt. And he rebelled against this imaginary notice with the rebellion of a man who, though he has failed, knows himself better than many who succeed. There is no hatred like that of the unjustly blamed for the unjustly praised. He cursed the editor and proprietor of the *Dawn*, who, though he was cruel and unscrupulous, yet prospered through the canny virtue of sobriety. That the man had any virtue whatever was perhaps, after all, where lay the sting. A passion of hate against this cool calculator of the value of respectability blazed in him. With the intensity of a strong fire swept by wind, he wished that he might show this man to the world as he was, avenge his own wrongs, drive a poisoned javelin at his enemy's heart even from the door-sill of death, and leave behind him as he stepped across it at least a revenge

revenge accomplished. Upon the problem how to effect this his mind fixed itself like a burning glass. Suddenly before his imagination the solution sprung up like the flame. He gave a short, curious laugh, darted at Hunt (at that moment wrathfully crumpling in his fist several sheets of "flimsy") the cunning glance of one insane, then rose and left the office. He returned shortly, but in the interval he had drunk two glasses of neat brandy.

The night passed. The reporters one by one finished their tasks and departed. Their cells once more became the homes exclusively of darkness and black beetles. Only "the night locals man" now remained. In his gas-lit cubby-hole, ornamented with coloured lithographs of actresses in tights and cheap likenesses of sporting and political celebrities, he sat contentedly smoking and writing out with painful scratching pen his little chronicle of minor crime. Old Master had toiled on doggedly. In the intervals of the regular work of the desk he had busied himself with some writing of his own. Hunt, noting this detail, had inferred that he was occupied with some "special" to an "outside" newspaper, and had had the careless and easy charity to hope that the work would bring him a dollar or so. At three, Master went home, and Hunt made his way to the composing-room to attend to the "make-up." The "night locals" man loafed about until half-past three, the hour when the paper went to press, and then he too departed.

Shortly afterwards, Hunt re-entered the now deserted editorial room, and began to make ready for the street. As he finished, the bell of the copy-box rang, and the fresh, damp newspaper—the first from the press—was sent down. He glanced at one or two of the heads about which he had certain doubts, found them as they should be, and stepped at once into the elevator. There the thought of the suicide occurring to him, he had curiosity enough

enough to look for the account. At what he saw he uttered a startled oath.

"Here," he shouted to the sleepy elevator boy, "carry me back upstairs—quick."

But why, after all, take it from the paper? No—it was straight, Master had done it, he knew. Anyway, it was only a couple of "sticks." Possibly, if he didn't delay, there might yet be time——

"No," he cried to the boy; "I've changed my mind. Get me downstairs like lightning, d'ye hear? Come, get a move on you—quick, now."

"What's the matter with you, anyway," growled the boy, between wonder and wrath.

"Never you mind, but hustle—hustle, can't you?" cried Hunt, now in an agony of impatience.

And when the elevator at last reached the ground floor, he ran from the building at full speed and jumped into the first cab he found. Neither whip nor curse was spared to get him rapidly to Master's lodgings.

II

Henry J. Conant, proprietor of the *Dawn*, was, as Hunt said, forty years old himself, but his good angel died young. As he wore a slight moustache and no beard, he looked even younger than he was. His mouth, twisted by sensuality, was thin-lipped and cruel. His eyes were hard, and their glances bore down yours as a Scotch claymore might bear down a French rapier. He was tall in person, gave much care to his dress, was overbearing in manner, and said what he chose without regard for the feelings of others. He was cynical, passionate, consistent only in so far as consistency

consistency paid, and made his only ends in life money and power. He had excellent control over himself: he allowed even his violent temper to show itself in two cases only—when it could not harm his interests, for pleasure; when it could further them, for profit. No one liked him: he had won his way without help from any one by sheer force of will. Imagine a bull which had intellect and which was not to be fooled by red cloaks. Rather than encounter such an animal, the cautious toreador would resign. In this imaginary beast is found the type of such men as Conant. He was an ugly antagonist, and knew it.

Conant's wife—a convenient woman, whose money had enabled him to become the proprietor of the *Dawn* as well as its editor—was a weak, sallow thing to whom he paid no attention. Her only pleasure was to read her husband's paper, of which she understood nothing, and which seemed to her a daily miracle. Her only use in life, in his opinion, was to keep his house. He lived in a suburban town, "not," to quote Hunt again, "because he loved men the less, but a low tax-rate more."

When, five hours after the *Dawn* went to press—that is to say, at half-past eight o'clock—Conant came downstairs to breakfast, his first act was to pick up the morning paper. The greatest pleasure of his day, his employés averred, was to seek out in its columns causes for fault-finding, for excuse to make the day of his managing editor a burden, and sharply to rebuke his night-editor in the evening. Nor was he above "cursing out" any reporter who was unlucky enough to offend him. He made no speciality of dignity. Opening the paper, he ran his eye first over a leading article which he himself had written on some question of local politics. He read its execrable English with the complacency of one whose only grammar has been the columns of newspapers. Its political shrewdness flattered his pride: his rude thrusts at his enemies

enemies pleased his malice. Then he looked through a paragraph or two of a religious article, found himself bored, reflected with the calm of one who has taught himself to accept facts which he does not understand, that his readers liked that sort of thing, supposed it was all right, and after a sniff of contempt at the column of book reviews, and the concurrent thought that after all "book-ads" paid, turned to the news columns. There almost the first "head" to catch his eye was the suicide of a Mr. Mainwaring at the H—— hotel. Through this, using the "cross-heads" as an index to the important points, he glanced hastily. At its close a second article followed with the caption: "Another Suicide: A Well-known Newspaper Man kills himself at his Rooms." Upon this his attention became at once fixed. First in the ordinary type of the paper came this short paragraph:

"Mr. John Master, a brilliant journalist long and favourably known in newspaper circles, and at the time of his death connected with the staff of the *Dawn*, committed suicide early this morning at his rooms at 671, Ashley Street. Directly he left work at the *Dawn* office at three o'clock this morning, Mr. Master proceeded at once to his lodgings, and went to his room, which he entered without attracting the attention of any of his sleeping fellow-lodgers. At half-past three, Mr. Frank Bartlett, who occupies the next apartment, was awakened by a pistol-shot, and on rushing into the room of the unfortunate man, found him stretched upon the bed with a bullet-hole in his forehead and the still smoking 42-calibre revolver clutched convulsively in his right hand. Mr. Master leaves no family."

The second portion of the article was in agate type. This, as Conant noted with quick disapproval, was true even of the introductory sentence, which by rule should have been included in the first paragraph and printed in the same type. As he read the opening

opening words of this longer part, Conant's face seemed to stiffen and harden visibly. They ran thus:

"At his bedside was found the following letter: 'Before God, I declare the hypocritical editor and proprietor of this paper responsible for my death. Oh, I know what will be said—that if I had let rum alone I would have been all right. I know very well that but for drink I might still be what I once was, one of the leading newspaper men of the city. But because I was weak, was that any reason why this man should take advantage of that weakness for his own ends and careless of my sufferings? No! Read what I say, and then see what you think of him; see if you think him the noble man who runs "the only respectable daily" in the city. We come from the same town, and I know all about him. And I propose to tell it too.'"

Conant instinctively darted a quick, cautious glance about the room, as if to see whether any one was observing him, and with a certain slight tightening of the lips, resumed his reading:

"'I am the older man, and came to the city first. When he came up to town with his miserable bit of experience in newspaper work as correspondent from a country legislature to a country weekly, I was managing editor of *Facts*, the biggest sensational liar in town, and he came straight to me. I wasn't a saint. I accepted the profession as I found it, cynically, and enjoyed its lies and its vulgarities, called the public an ass, and thought myself its superior. Most journalists do. But at least I was good-natured and generous, and I gave this raw youngster his chance, and was rather proud to see him advance, as he did, rapidly. I drank. I lost my place, got another not so good; lost that. As I went down, he went up. Finally, all I could get to do was irregular work, space work, what not—no one would give me regular employment. Meanwhile, he had got possession of this

this paper—the devil knows how. I only know this, that while he ran it for the stock company which owned it, as he did for several years, it lost money rapidly, until they were all disgusted and sick, and they sold it to him cheap as dirt. Now, just as quick as he got it into his own hands, it began to make money. There was some funny business or other, you may be sure of that: and if he wants to sue me for libel, let him come to hell after me if he wants to. He'll be welcome—the devil's proud of him.'"

A shade of cynical amusement passed over Conant's face at this outburst. "He's simply playing into my hands," he reflected, "talking such rot. If his revelations don't amount to any more than that——" He relaxed his attitude a little, and took an easier position in his chair.

"'When he got control of the paper, then began economies. The men who had served the paper long and faithfully, and by right of their service and ability drew large salaries, were one by one dismissed, and who took their places? Boys and old sots—boys for strength, old sots for experience. They supplemented each other well, and both were cheap. The sots did not stay long—neither did the boys. The sots went on sprees, and sots who happened to be sober took their places. The boys left on their first demand for an increase of salary. They were told that if they didn't like their wages they could get out. There were plenty of others. The force was kept horribly small besides, and the men were worked within an inch of their lives. The boys paid dear for their training. The office was a regular hell, where men got thin and pale and nervous from overwork, and then broke down and were discharged without notice. But the salary list was the lowest in the city, and while this worthy proprietor got the full benefit of these youngsters' enthusiasm and strength, he saved

saved thousands of dollars a year in salaries alone. All the thanks they got were curses for the blunders which of course they made. This was the office at which I applied for work. It was absolutely necessary for me to earn money. I had a feeble old mother up-country who only had me to keep her from the workhouse. *I* thought this worthy gentleman would do me a good turn, just as I had done him one year before. He knew I could do good work. He knew my mother. He believed my promise to keep straight —I know he did. I saw it in his eye. And what did he do? He took advantage of my necessities to offer me less than the other old sots, my likes. I cursed him inwardly and took his offer—I had to, and he knew it. At the end of a month he reduced my pay, and didn't condescend to give me an explanation for it. Still, I hung on, and kept straight. Then he set a green young fellow to work on the day-desk, though the man on it could do all the work on it himself by working like a nigger every second of his time. I knew what that meant. He don't incur extra expense for nothing. He was training my successor. Last night I got the G. B. Why? Because I got 10 dols. a week and the kid would do it for 8 dols. That's why. Did my former kindness to him, did the thought of my poor old mother whom his action would send to the workhouse make him hesitate one second to save that two dollars a week on my salary? Not a bit of it. I had served his turn, and he slung me aside as a drunkard does an empty bottle, careless on what stones I was broken. Thank God, my mother died day before yesterday. I got the news along with my discharge.' "

"That's all sorehead stuff," was Conant's mental comment. "An editorial saying that if the complaints of all the disgruntled and crank employés were believed——will fix that. My readers are mostly employers of help. They'll see the point. But "—and the

the editor's face suddenly clouded with wrath—"what did Hunt mean by printing such stuff. He'll get his walking papers so quick he won't know what's happened to him."

"'And is there any need for this niggardliness, this cruel and unjust under-payment? No sir.'"

"What's that?" muttered Conant, straightening himself suddenly.

"'There may have been once; but there isn't now. He takes great pains to keep the idea going that the paper makes nothing. But I know better. I know the minimum amount of advertising required to make the paper pay. There isn't a day that the paper doesn't have more than that amount—not a day. When that day comes there'll be no paper. Any one who knows its kind-hearted proprietor knows enough to know that. He doesn't spend his time working for the public good for pure philanthropy, and besides, for a man utterly without principle, as he is, circulation and advertising aren't the only ways in which a paper can be made to pay. This new traction road which every one should know is a big swindle—has his paper ever said a word against it? And how when he has a mania for boiling down things and will never print a political speech in full, be it never so important—how, I say, does it happen that the speeches of this corporation's counsel before committees are reported verbatim every time, to the exclusion oftentimes of legitimate news? How does it happen that speeches adverse to the corporation are never printed at all? Go in as advertising? Oh, yes, they're paid for; but a good many things go in as advertising which aren't advertising by a long chalk. How about this "special correspondence" from boom towns South and West, which begins when the speculators take hold of them, and stops when they let go? Is that advertising too? It always cracks up the goods, and is paid for. So I suppose

suppose it is. But the public—which is a fool—thinks it intelligent and disinterested investigation, and nobody tells it different. And I'm a fool, if a certain gang of political heelers in this town don't pay the paper regular tribute of hush-money. Nothing's ever said about their tricks, anyway, and the head of the paper is too well informed not to know about them. And I happen to know he's "in on the ground floor" in a good many enterprises of this same gang. There's more ways than one to pay bribes. There isn't a column of this precious, respectable sheet that isn't for sale—except the religious column. Nobody wants to buy that. Even once in a while its financial column, which he has shrewdness enough to keep both honest and able most of the time, is—oh, I know it—is worked in the interests of scheming and sufficiently generous speculators; and all this in a paper which shrieks periodically at the "regrettable sensationalism of the contemporary press." Other papers feed their pig-headed readers' swill, I know, but it's good, honest swill, and the pigs grunt their satisfaction over it. But this paper sells veal and calls it chicken, though you'd think "a discerning public" would know there couldn't be much cooked chicken in a shop where there was so much lively crowing. He has discovered that hypocrisy in journalism pays, and he's working it for all it is worth, and making money hand over fist. Meanwhile, he is starving his employés, even going so far as to sit up nights in devising schemes to take all the "fat" from his compositors, and you should hear him curse his night-editor if there happens to be three inches overset. He crushes the life out of every one whom he gets in his clutches that he himself may get the fatter, like an anaconda. He's through with me. He's got the last bit of valuable service out of me, and throws me on one side. But I don't like to become a sandwich man and advertise corn doctors, and die finally in a police

police station of *delirium tremens*. That would please him too much, or rather, it wouldn't trouble him at all—he'd know nothing about it. He has made me choose between that and suicide. On his head be it! Is there a hell? I hope so, for if there is, I'll be there, and after a time shall see him there with me. It'll be a sight to endure torments for. I say to him, *au revoir!*'"

"It'll be a fight to kill that," said Conant, who looked pale.

While he read this letter, so vulgar in its lack of dignity, in its cheap phraseology, in its desperate pettiness, yet withal so terrible for him, his mind, active as a shuttle, was weaving about it a varied commentary of thought and emotion. It ran in and out of all the feelings—except pity. In those moments in which he realised the full import of the latter part of the old journalist's dying communication to the world, he had the sickening sense of defeat that is comparable only to the sensation of one hit in the pit of the stomach. Over the few points which were not true, and which he could disprove, he felt unreasonable exultation. For Master's sinister farewell he had only contempt. And it ran in and out of all the thoughts—except those of regret. This point was true; but who would believe it on the word of a revengeful and drunken employé, like Master? Would not a general denial, coupled with some eager—no, not eager—defamation of Master's character clear him? That point wasn't true: could he disprove it? What would people say to this? Wouldn't the public be delighted with that? How far could he count on public sympathy? Wouldn't Master have the better part of that? Or could he by clever lying bring it to his side? The affair would hurt the circulation of the *Dawn*. But if he could bring the public to think him abused, perhaps it would help the paper—be an "ad" for it. What would be its effect upon his political

political fortunes? What would the other papers say? How did Hunt happen to print it? Wouldn't he fix Hunt?

When he finished reading, the query that remained uppermost in his mind was how widely Master's damaging letter had been printed. A pile of morning papers was by him. He took up the *Aurora*—nothing there. He looked quickly through the *Atlas*—nothing there. In the *Palladium* there was nothing; in the *Champion*—nothing; in the *Union*, the *Democrat*, the *Free Press*, the *People's Argus*—again and always there was nothing. Was his own paper then the only one to defame him? That was not possible! If Master had committed suicide how happened it that no other journal had printed a line about the occurrence? His nostrils dilated a little, as he began to scent a mystery. He picked up the *Dawn* again, and with eager, inquiring eyes read the circumstances of the suicide. It took place at half-past three in the morning, he was reminded. At half-past three? Between that hour and the time he usually went home, Master could not have gone to his rooms and written the letter: the time was not sufficient. Besides, half-past three was the hour at which the *Dawn* went to press. For the suicide to become known to the police and subsequently to the reporters, half-an-hour at least would be necessary. For the night-local man to write his account and for the compositors to put it into type would require at the very lowest estimate another half-hour. Half-past four—Hunt would not have held the presses an hour for an article defaming his own chief, even had he dared and had the wicked will to do so. Plainly, the report as it was printed must have been prepared and put into type several hours before the suicide took place. What did that mean? He looked at the paper again in search of some clue. The explanation struck him full in the face as he read the date—April 1.

He

He understood. Master, to avenge his discharge, had somehow smuggled this account into the paper. In a little time now, his morning sleep ended, his enemy would resort to some cheap restaurant, and there with the *Dawn* propped up before him against the sugar-bowl, would eat his breakfast and read and chuckle in secure triumph.

"God!" And with this intense oath, Conant leaped in a rage to his feet.

Thus outrageously to be scored, thus ignominiously to be fooled, thus shamefully to have his own weapon, the *Dawn*, wrested from his hand and turned against him by the most contemptible of his dependants—what could be more hideously humiliating? He thought of the delight of those rival newspapers against whose sensational methods he had so often hypocritically thundered. He divined how they would dress up the episode, and send it journeying abroad, like a skeleton in cap and bells, for the amusement of the nation. He read the head-lines under which they would place it. He heard what Homeric mirth would shake newspaperdom that day; what laughing congratulations would be given Master. He foresaw what capital his political opponents would make of the incident, with how pleasant an anecdote it would furnish them, how the story would follow him like his shadow, always present, the most elusive and exasperating of enemies. And this Master, this sot, this. . . . .

"God!"

He seized his hat and overcoat and hurried to the station. And as he was being carried into the city by the too slow suburban train, he set himself to devise some scheme whereby yet Master might be thwarted. So rapid was the rush of his ideas that he seemed to have forgotten his anger. In reality, this kept his

 mind

mind active, as the unseen fires in an engine make the visible wheels revolve.

When with set and angry face he stepped into the editorial rooms of the *Dawn*, there was an immediate hush among the talking groups of reporters. He divined at once that this interruption of regular work was due to Master's letter, and with an access of anger he turned upon Somers, the managing editor. This gentleman guessed what was coming and tried to ward it off:

"I've sent a man," he said quickly, "to see if it's true about Master."

"True!" shouted Conant shrilly. "True! you fool, what's the date of this paper? What's the date of this paper, I say?"

"Yes, I know," answered Somers hurriedly; "it's probably a fake, but still——"

"*Probably* a fake," cried Conant, "you know as well as I do what game this contemptible bummer has played on the paper. Here, give me some copy paper—I'll settle his account. And you Somers—you be d——d careful you don't hire another man like him in a hurry. It'll be all your place is worth."

Conant, not Somers, had hired Master; but Somers thought best to waive the point. Without answering, he handed his chief the paper he desired. Conant took it, but immediately giving it back, said:

"No—I won't write. You take down what I say. And be quick, too."

Pacing up and down the floor, he began to dictate a plausible "editorial." In it he represented himself as a benevolent person —the fact that there were a dozen men present who knew he was nothing of the sort was immaterial—who out of pure charity had given Master employment. With righteous indignation he explained

explained to the discriminating public that again and again he had been forced to caution this irreclaimable and ungrateful drunkard against indulging his besetting vice, and that at last, though with great reluctance, he had been compelled to discharge him. During all the time that Master had remained in the office, he had acted toward him with untold forbearance and done everything possible to reform him. And what had been the reward of his charitable kindness? Master had played him a most scurvy trick. He had taken advantage of the youth and inexperience of the night-editor, to whom he acted as assistant, to insert in the paper a lot of lies about its owner beside which those of Ananias showed white. Then point by point he rehearsed the history of his relations with Master. To each one, with the utmost skill, he gave a colouring favourable to himself, damaging to Master. The public, he concluded, would know which one to believe.

The managing editor wrote to Conant's dictation with stolid cynicism. The reporters about listened with a curious expression on their faces: when there was no chance that the "boss" would see them they exchanged solemn winks. When the article was ended, Somers looked up inquiringly.

"Have that put into type at once," said Conant. "Rush it, and have a proof pulled immediately. That'll fix him. Run it in all the evening editions, and to-morrow morning, d'ye hear?"

Somers obediently put the copy in the box and rang the bell. Just as the copy-box was whisked up to the composing-room, Hunt, looking rather haggard, stepped into the room.

As the canons of realism and those of propriety do not coincide, the abuse with which Conant greeted the young night-editor cannot here be completely set down. "Get out of here at once," he commanded in the highest, most strident tones of his harsh voice

voice, "do you hear? I want no man about who can let in the paper as you've done. You're either a fool or Master's accomplice, I don't care which. I won't have you in this office, and if I find that you've had anything to do with this affair, I'll make the city too hot to hold you—do you understand? Get out before I kick you out, you idiot. There are some April fool jokes that can't be played twice. Get out, I say!"

Hunt, utterly tired out as he was, staggered back against the wall as if struck by a physical blow, and listened to this onslaught with an air of such genuine bewilderment that even Conant was impressed by it.

"I don't know what you're talking about," he whispered at last.

Conant thrust a copy of the *Dawn* under his nose. "There," he cried, "look there! See what a fine lot of stuff you let get into my paper! Do you mean to say you know nothing about it?"

Hunt read the letter rapidly. Then taking a copy of the paper from his own pocket, he compared the two.

"There," he said, "it wasn't in the first edition. Yours is the second. That went to press after I left the office. There was only a harmless announcement of Master's death in the first. You'd better talk to the foreman."

This idea struck Conant. He turned quickly to Somers. "Is the night-foreman here by any chance?" he asked.

"Yes," said Somers, "he happens to be doing a day turn."

"Then why in thunder didn't you say so before? Call him down!"

A minute later, Hammond, a resolute-looking fellow whose bare arms were covered with printer's ink, appeared in the doorway.

"Why,"

"Why," said Conant, rapping the paper fiercely, "did you let that get into the second edition?"

"It came up all right, and so I printed it," said Hammond coolly. "I didn't read it—I don't edit the paper."

"Well, then why didn't you set it in time for the first edition?"

"When you don't make me let all the 'comps' go the moment there is any danger of their getting paid for waiting time, perhaps I can have enough men about to set up late stuff to catch the first edition. And perhaps you'd better spend a little money and get us a few more cases of agate."

"What did you print in agate for, anyway?"

"It was marked agate, and your rule is for letters to be in agate anyhow. That copy came up very late. I had all I could do to get it into the paper. The proofs weren't read. There wasn't time."

Foiled here, Conant turned again upon Hunt. "When you saw what you did in the paper, why didn't you investigate? It don't make any difference whether you saw the whole of it or not. It was your business to see it. If you didn't, so much the worse for you. I won't have any such jokes played in my paper."

"There's no joke about it," said Hunt quietly. "I went to his room just as soon as I saw the notice in the paper. He'd done just what he said. He's dead."

"What's that?" cried Conant. "You're lying. Master hadn't the sand. This is a new trick."

"Well," retorted Hunt hotly, "if you don't believe it, you just wait till you read it in the afternoon papers, that's all. I tell you he's dead."

"Well, it's d——d lucky for him he is, that's all," said Conant. "That lets him out; but it don't help you a bit. Why didn't you

you investigate? Instead of that, like a fool, you rushed off to Master's room, did you, and left that in the paper. Didn't you know any better than to rush off to that besotted hound?"

"You don't think, do you," cried Hunt, "that I was going to let him kill himself if I could help it?"

"That was none of your business," retorted Conant. "You should have investigated. You're responsible for what goes into the paper. You don't think, do you, that I hired you as Master's keeper?"

"No," cried Hunt, "I don't—Cain."

Conant paid no attention. The bell rang and the copy-box clattered down with the proof of Conant's editorial article. Conant jumped for it, and looked through it rapidly. "Here," he said to Somers, "scratch out what's said about the April fool, and add a few words about the death: say, the most charitable view is that his lies were the result of insanity. And send a revised proof to all the papers."

A Madrigal

By Olive Custance

Ah ! leave my soul like forest pool
  In shadow smiling unafraid—
Let not thy laughter stir its cool
  Clear depths, sweet maid,
Let not, I pray, thy sunlike hair
Pierce to the thoughts that slumber there !

My soul is still as summer noon—
  Its inmost shrines are full of sleep ;
But when the stars of dreamland swoon
  'Twill wake and weep ;
The dawn of Love that brings thy blue
Bright eyes, will bring a sorrow too !

My soul is silent—trouble not
  Its secret reveries with thy songs.
The rare red tint thy lips have got !
  The whole world longs
To kiss them—therefore speak not, dear ;
My soul must struggle, should it hear.

* * * * *

I see

A Madrigal

I see thee, and my soul is swung
  In golden trances of delight;
I hear thee, and my tremulous tongue
  Hurls forth a flight
Of bird-like songs, saluting thee.
Oh, *come* and dwell and dream with me.



Padstow

By Miss Gertrude Prideaux-Brune



The Dead Wall

By H. B. Marriott Watson

THE dawn stared raw and yellow out of the east at Rosewarne. Its bleak and ugly face smouldered through morose vapours. The wind blew sharp against the windows, shaking them in their casements. The prospect from that lonely chamber overawed him with menace ; it glowered upon him. The houses in the square, wrapped in immitigable gloom, were to him ominous memorials of death. They frightened him into a formless panic. Anchored in that soundless sea, they terrified him with their very stillness. In dreary ranks they rose, a great high wall of doom, lifting their lank chimneys to the dreadful sky. They obsessed him with forebodings to which he could put no term, for which he could find no reason. Shrouded under its great terror, his poor mind fell into deeper depression under the influence of those malign and ugly signals. He strove to withdraw his thoughts and direct them upon some different subject. He wrenched them round to the contemplation of his room, his walls, his wife. A dull pain throbbed in the back of his head. He repeated aloud the topics upon which he would have his mind revolve, but the words rang in his ears without meaning. He touched the pictures on the wall, he spoke their names, he covered his face and strained hard to recapture coherent thought. The subjects mocked him : they were too nimble

nimble and elusive for his tired brain; they danced out of reach, and he followed blindly till a deeper darkness fell. They grew faint and shadowy, like wraiths in a mist, and he pursued the glancing shadows. Finally, his brain grew blank; it was as if consciousness had lapsed; and he found himself regarding a fly that crawled upon the pane. Outside lay the oppression of that appalling scene that horrified him—he knew not why.

Rosewarne was growing used to these nervous exhibitions. This unequal struggle had been repeated through many weeks, but he had always so far come out of it with personal security. The dread that some day he would fail continually haunted him, and increased the strain of the conflict. He wondered what lay at the back of this horrible condition, and shuddered as he wondered. And he knew now that he must not let himself adrift, but must dispose the devils by every means. He broke into a whistle, and moved about the room carelessly. It was a lively stave from the streets that his lips framed, but it conveyed to him no sense of sound. He perambulated the chamber with a false air of cheerfulness. He eyed the bed with his head askew, winking as if to share a jest with it. He patted the pillows, arranging and disarranging them in turn. He laughed softly, merrily, emptily. He seized the dumb-bells from the mantelpiece and whirled them about his head; he chafed his hands, he rubbed his flesh. Little by little the blood moved with more content through his body, and the pulse of his heart sank slowly.

Outside, the dawn brightened and the wind came faster. Rosewarne looked forth and nodded; then he turned and left the room, his face flashing as he passed the mirror, like the distempered face of a corpse. Across the landing he paused before a door, and, bending to the keyhole, listened; little low sounds of life came to his ears, and suddenly his haggard face crowded with emotions.

He

He rose and softly descended the stairs to his study. The house lay in the quiet of sleep, and within the solitude of that rich room he, too, was as still as the sleepers. The inferior parts of the window formed a blind of stained glass, but the grey light flowed through the upper panes into a magnificent wilderness. The cold ashes of the fire, by which he had sat at his task late into the morning, lay still within the grate. The little ensigns of a human presence, the scattered papers, the dirty hearth, all the instruments of his work, looked mean and squalid within the spacious dignity of that high room. He lit the gas and sat down to his table, moving his restless fingers among the papers. It was as if his members arrogantly claimed their independence, and refused the commands of a weak brain. His mind had abrogated. His hands shifted furtively like the hands of a pickpocket: they wandered among the papers and returned to him. The clock droned out the hour slowly, and at that he started, shook his wits together, and began in haste to turn about the documents. He knew now the sheet of which he had sent his hands in quest. Large and blue and awful, it had been his ghost throughout the night. He could see the figures scrawled upon it in his own tremulous writing, rows upon rows of them, thin and sparse and self-respecting at the top, but to the close, fevered, misshapen, and reckless, fighting and jostling in a crowd for space upon the page. He laid his hand upon the horrible thing; he opened his ledgers; and sat deciphering once more his own ruin.

The tragedy lay bare to his shrinking eyes; it leaped forth at him from the blurred and confused figures. There was no need to rehearse them; he had reiterated them upon a hundred scrolls in a hundred various ways these many weeks. They had become his enemies, to deceive whom he had invoked the wreck of a fine intelligence. He had used all the wiles and dodges of a cunning mind

mind to entrap them to his service. He had spent a weary campaign upon them, storming them with fresh troops of figures, deploying and ambuscading with all the subterfuge of a subtle business mind. But there now, as at the outset of his hopeless fight, the issue remained unchanged; the terrible sum of his sin abided, unsubtracted, undivided, unabridged. As he regarded it at this moment it seemed to assume quickly a vaster proportion. His crime cried out upon him, calling for vengeance in his ears. Seizing a pen, eagerly, vacantly, he set forth anew to recompose the items.

Rosewarne worked on for a couple of hours, holding his quivering fingers to the paper by the sheer remnants of his will. His brain refused its offices, and he stumbled among the numerical problems with false and blundering steps. To add one sum to another he must ransack the litter of his mind; the knowledge that runs glibly to the tongue of a child he must rediscover by persistent and arduous concentration. But still he kept his seat, and jotted down his cyphers. About him the house stirred slowly; noises passed his door and faded; the grim and yellow sun rose higher and struck upon the table, contending with the gaslight. But Rosewarne paid no heed; he wrestled with his numb brain and his shivering fingers, wrestled to the close of the page; where once more the hateful figures gleamed in bold ink, menacing and blinking, his old ghost renewed and invested with fresh life.

The pen dropped from his hand, his head fell upon his arms, and as he lay in that helpless attitude of despair that protests not, of misery that can make no appeal, the door fell softly open and his wife entered.

"Freddy, whatever are you doing here like this?" she said, with surprise in her voice. "Have you gone to sleep?"

Rosewarne

Rosewarne lifted his head sharply and turned to her. Athwart the pallor of his face gleamed for an instant a soft flush of pleasure, and his dull eyes lit up with affection.

"I was doing some work, Dorothy," said he, "and I was tired."

Mrs. Rosewarne took a step nearer. Her fine grey eyes regarded him with wonder and with inquiry, and in her voice a little impatience mingled with a certain kindliness.

"It's very absurd your working like this," she said, "and in this cold room without a fire? Aren't you coming to breakfast?"

Rosewarne got up from his chair. "Why, yes," he laughed. "Of course. I didn't realise it was ready. Oh, Dolly dear," he paused and put his hand to his head with a look of perplexity; then his face lightened. "Dolly, I've got something for you."

"For me!" she asked, and the curve of her lips drooped in a pretty smile of curiosity.

He fumbled in a drawer and withdrew a packet.

"Yes, darling. You know what day it is. It's your birthday, and you're twenty——"

"Oh, for goodness' sake, Freddy, don't," she interrupted with a touch of impatience; and then opening the packet examined the contents with care. The light dawned in her eyes. "How very pretty! I was in need of a bracelet. Freddy, you are a good boy. But come, you mustn't catch cold. Come into the dining-room, and get warm, you simpleton."

She patted him softly on the head, and fell again to the scrutiny of her present. Rosewarne did not move, but watched her, smiling. "Aren't you coming?" she asked, looking up at last.

His eyes met hers and pleaded with them dumbly, but she made no sign, returning once more to her jewels.

"Isn't it worth a kiss, Dolly?" he said softly.

Mrs. Rosewarne looked at him vaguely. "What? Oh, well, yes, if you like, I suppose." She bent towards him, and he touched her cheek gently. "But it was very nice of you to think of me," she said, withdrawing. "Come to breakfast now."

Rosewarne followed her into the breakfast-room, with a mask-screen of impotence. He fumbled with his chair; the napkin fluttered out of his fingers; he pulled a plate to him, and the silver rattled under his clumsy action; a fork clattered to the floor. Mrs. Rosewarne winced.

"How very stupid you are to-day, Freddy!" she said petulantly.

He laughed a short meaningless laugh, and begged her pardon. Her movements were full of gentle grace; her breath came easily and with the best breeding. Her teacup tinkled sweetly, and only that and the soft sussurra of her sleeves marked her stately presence at the table. She looked at the bracelet comfortably, and lifted her cup to her lips. Rosewarne glanced at her timidly. The sickly light shone clear upon the fine contours of her placid face; the evil magic of that dreary day was transmuted upon her hair. She set down her cup and met his eyes.

"What a dreadful colour you are!" she said critically. The ghastly yellow of his face repelled her. "I wish you would get better, and not rise at such ridiculous hours."

"I slept ill, Dolly," he answered with a faint smile. He resumed his breakfast feverishly. The knuckles of his hands seemed to stand out awkwardly; his elbows waggled; he mouthed at his food in a frightened fashion.

"Good heavens, Freddy," cried his wife, wrinkling her nose in distaste, "why do you eat like that? It's more like an animal than a human being. Your manners are becoming perfectly awful."

He

He started and dropped his knife. "What the devil does it matter how I eat?" he exclaimed angrily. "You—you——" His ideas faded from him, and he sat staring at her in vacant indignation. Then he put his hand to his head. "Oh, forgive me, Dolly; forgive me, please. I'm tired and——"

"My dear man," broke in Mrs. Rosewarne coldly, "if you will make yourself ill, what can you expect?" She unfolded a morning paper and ran her eyes down the columns; Rosewarne sat looking across the room into the fire. Suddenly she called to him in a new voice. "Mr. Maclagan came to town yesterday, Freddy, and paid a visit to Downing Street."

"Yes?" he said, starting again.

She drew down the paper and looked at him over the edge, her eyes filled with some excitement.

"Do you hear, Freddy dear? Now is your chance to make the arrangement final."

He gazed at her, his face contorted in a desperate attempt to concentrate his thoughts upon her words. What was she saying? And what did it mean?

"Freddy, don't you hear?" she cried again in a voice in which impatience blended with a certain eagerness. She leaned forward and put a hand upon his arm. He clutched at it feverishly with his fingers. "Lord Hambleton is favourable, I know, and it only remains to secure Maclagan," she went on quickly. "He, you know, was inclined to agree when you saw him before. I'm sure that the nail is ready for the hammer. There is South Wiltshire, where you are known, and no one yet settled upon by the Party. See, dear; you must call on him to-day, and that, with another cheque for the Party, should place the matter beyond doubt. Freddy! Freddy! Don't you hear what I'm saying. For goodness' sake, don't look like a corpse, if you are ill."

"Yes,

"[illegible] Daisy," said Rosewarne hurriedly.

"And for the love of decency, don't Daisy me," said Mrs. Rosewarne with a petulant movement of her shoulders. "It's bad enough to have to answer to an elderly Quaker name like [illegible]."

Rosewarne got up from the table. "For God's sake, be civil to me, if you can't be kind," he said sharply. She regarded him coolly. "What is it you want?" he asked.

Mrs. Rosewarne rapped her knuckles angrily upon the table.

"I imagine we had made that pretty clear between us long ago," she said with a sarcastic emphasis; "we agreed that you were to go into Parliament, and we laid our plans to that end. The only thing wanting was the particular seat, and now it's found you ask me what I'm talking about."

She looked at him with placid disdain. Rosewarne shuddered; he remembered now, as in a dream, the ambitions she had formed for him.

"No, no, dear," he said. "Tell me. It's all right. I'll see Lord—Lord Hambleton. The——"

Mrs. Rosewarne's expression turned swiftly to complacency.

"No," she said, "leave him to me, Freddy. I shall see him this afternoon at the Charters's. You must see Maclagan to-day, and we'll meet and talk the matter over at dinner."

She smiled upon him with a tolerant air of patronage. Rosewarne stood by the window, restlessly twitching his fingers.

"You will not be in to lunch?" he asked, dully.

"No; I'm going to the Charters's. We have each a long day before us. It's a sort of crisis in our lives. I'm tired of this undistinguished competence. Any one can be the partner in a bank. It is the House that opens the gate to success."

She rose and swept her skirts behind her with a motion of her arm

arm. She regarded herself in the mirror with a face of satisfaction, directing with nimble fingers an errant lock of her hair.

"And now you'll be off, I suppose," she said, and turned on him laughing. "Well, Freddy, pluck up your heart and speak your best; you have a tongue as neat as any one when you like. Don't wear so lugubrious a countenance, dear—come!"

She kissed him lightly on the forehead, laying her hands on his shoulders, her eyes sparkling with excitement. Rosewarne put out his arms and caught her. His eyes devoured her. "Kiss me again, Dolly," he sputtered. "Kiss me again. Kiss me on the lips."

She laughed, a faint colour rose in her cheeks, and she struggled in his clutch. "Dolly, Dolly!" he pleaded. A frown of embarrassment gathered in her forehead.

"Do let me go," she said sharply.

He obeyed; his arms fell to his sides; wistfully he watched her withdraw. Stately in her flowing, rustling robes, receding from him, she sailed through the doorway, and with the loss of that fine vision the light and the flush fell from him, and all that remained was an ignoble figure with discoloured cheeks and sunken head. In that moment and with the chill of that departing grace fresh upon him, he regarded his tragic position plainly and without illusion. The poor rags of his last unvoiced hopes dropped from his outcast soul. He had deferred the story of his ruin, in part out of shame, but much, too, out of pity, and because of some shreds of confidence in his own fortunes. And yet, implicit in that silence he had kept, but unacknowledged in his own thoughts, l ad been the fear of her demeanour in the crisis. He knew her for a worldly woman, clad in great aspirations; he had taken the measure of her trivial vanities; he had sounded the shallows of her passionless heart; and still he had trusted, still he had nursed an empty

empty faith in her affection. But now at this slight repulse somehow the props swayed beneath his rickety platform, and his thoughts ran in a darker current of despair. The bankruptcy, the guilt, the horror of his defalcations, were no longer the Evil to come, but merely now the steps by which he mounted to the real tragedy of his life.

Rosewarne quietly took up his hat, and drawing on his coat, passed out of the house and walked slowly towards the City.

It was upon two o'clock when Mrs. Rosewarne descended from the portico of her house and was enclosed within her landau by the footman. She was in a fervour which became her admirably; her cheeks were touched with points of colour, and her fine eyes brightened as with the flash of steel. She itched to try the temper of her diplomacy, and, as she entered the drawing-room of her hostess, the thought that she was well equipped for the encounter filled her anew with zest. Her eyes, piercing from that handsome face, challenged the luncheon-party. Mrs. Charters gave her a loud effusive welcome, as the beauty of the entertainment, and a general murmur of greeting seemed to salute her ears. Stepping a pace from the company and engaging easily with her hostess, Mrs. Rosewarne denoted the guests with sharp glances. Of her own disposition at the table she could have no certainty; the occasion was urgent; and with a nod she summoned Lord Hambleton to her side.

"And you, Lord Hambleton!" said she with a pretty air of surprise, "why, I heard you were in Scotland."

"Scotland!" he said, shrugging his shoulders and smiling. "What! Scotland in January, and the session like a drawn sword at one's heart."

"Ah!" she replied, "I had forgotten the session. And yet my poor husband talks enough about it."

"Indeed!"

"Indeed!" said the Whip with good-humour, "there is still some one, then, who bothers about us."

She lifted her shoulders slightly, as one who would disclaim a personal participation in the folly.

"Doesn't every one?" she asked.

"Why, we talk of ourselves," said he laughing, "but I did not know any one else took an interest in us. We have outlived our time, you see. We are early Victorians, so to speak. Representative government is a glorious tradition, like the English flag or Balaclava—very brave, very wonderful, but very unimportant. I know we bulk largely in the newspapers. It is our *métier*. But I wonder why. The habit exists when the utility is fled. Is it because the advertisers love us, do you think? It is the only reason I can conceive. We all owe our being to the Births, Deaths and Marriages. The servant-girl, my dear Mrs. Rosewarne, confers upon me the fame of a Tuesday's issue, for the shilling she expends upon a 'Wanted.' Alas!" He pulled his features into an expression of dismay. "When the hoarding and the sky-sign come in we shall go out."

Mrs. Rosewarne laughed gently, a demure intelligence shining from her eyes.

"And you," said he quizzically, "you don't care for us?"

"Oh, I!" she retorted with a sigh. "Yes, I talk of you. I am obliged to talk of you over the hearth-rug. I assure you I have all your names by rote, and rattle them off like a poll-parrot."

"Ah!" said Lord Hambleton, peering into her face curiously; "I can appreciate your tone. You are weary of us."

"Frankly, yes," said she, smiling. They both laughed, and he made a gesture of apology.

"Why?" he asked.

The voice of a butler cried from the doorway; there was a sudden stir in the room, and then a little hush.

"We are separated, alas!" said Lord Hambleton.

"Not at all," said Mrs. Charters, suddenly, at his elbow. "I believe you are neighbours."

Mrs. Rosewarne's heart bounded in her side, and then beat placidly with its accustomed rhythm. Lord Hambleton looked at her. "That's very nice," he murmured.

At the table he turned to her with an immediate air of interest. "Why?" he repeated.

Her gaze had wandered across the table with a profession of gentle indifference. She was surveying the guests with a remote abstraction; plucked out of which she glanced at him with a pretty hint of embarrassment, her forehead frowning as though to recover the topic of their conversation.

"Why?" she echoed; and then: "Oh yes," said she, smiling as out of a memory regained. "Because—well, because, what does it all avail?"

"Nothing, I grant you," he replied easily, "or very little, save to ourselves. You forget us. We have our business. Our fathers gamed and we talk. Don't forget us."

He spoke in railing tones, almost jocosely, and she lifted her eyebrows a line.

"Ah yes!" she assented. "Yes, but me and the rest of us, are we to keep you in your fun?"

He paused before replying, and noted every particular distinction in her handsome face. They were at close quarters; he leaned a trifle nearer, and lowered his voice to a mocking confidence:

"Mrs. Rosewarne, you would never blow upon us, surely." He feigned to hang in suspense upon her answer; the proximity touched

touched him with a queer elation ; she shot upon him one of her loveliest glances.

"I can hold my tongue for a friend, Lord Hambleton."

"Come," he said, nodding, "that is better. That is a very sportsmanlike spirit."

Mrs. Rosewarne considered, smiling the while she continued her meal. The approach was long, but to manœuvre heightened her spirits, and she was now to make a bolder movement.

"But why," she asked, "should you expect mercy from a woman ?"

"I don't, Heaven knows," he responded promptly ; "I wonder at it, and admire."

"I think you have had a very long innings," said she, thoughtfully, "and were it in my power I would show no mercy."

Lord Hambleton laughed contentedly. "Oh, well !" he said.

"There is no opportunity for women," continued Mrs. Rosewarne, wistfully ; "there has never been."

"Who would have suspected that you were ambitious ?" commented Lord Hambleton, archly.

She threw up her jewelled fingers. "Ambitious !" she said, impatiently. "I am a woman. Where is the use ? That is your business ; mine is the boudoir, naturally. We are always—in the field, you call it, don't you ? Men go to the wickets. My poor husband would tear out his heart for a seat. He is sound, he is good, he has wits, he is tolerable ; he would serve excellently well upon a minor committee, and would never give a shadow of trouble. He would never ask questions, or soar at Cabinets. Yet it is, I suppose, ambition of a kind. But me ! What has it to do with me ! A woman knows nothing—of politics, no more than life. I can enjoy no vicarious pomp. No ! give me the authority myself ; give

give me a share in it, Lord Hambleton, and then I will tell you if I am ambitious!"

She put her head aside, and appeared with this tirade to drop the subject; she made a feint of listening to a conversation across the table. She smiled at the jest that reached her as if she had forgotten her companion. And yet she was aware that the aspect of her face, at which he was staring, was that which best became her. Lord Hambleton watched the long and delicate lines warm with soft blood, and his own senses were strangely affected.

"But you would influence him," he said presently. She came back with a display of reluctance, and seemed to pause, searching for his meaning.

"Oh!" she said, "Heavens! I have higher aims than that. Make him Under-Secretary, and he would be worth influencing; but poor Freddy——" She shrugged her shoulders and looked away again, as though impatient of the subject. Perhaps she was really tired of the conversation, he reflected.

"Well, here we are," he said, with deprecation in his voice, "talking all the time on a subject which you professed at the outset bored you. How unpardonable of me!"

"Bored me!" she said, opening her eyes at him and very innocently. "Oh, not talking with any one worth while."

Lord Hambleton's eyes dropped, and he was silent. The wine had fired his blood no less than her beauty. He looked up again, and met her glance by misadventure. A show of colour flooded her face; the pulses beat in her white throat. He did not know why, but his hands trembled a little, and a bar seemed broken down between them.

"Upon my soul!" he said, with an excited laugh, "I believe you would regenerate us all, if you were in the House!"

"I'm sure I should," she said gaily. Her heart fluttered in her

her side. "But there is no chance of that; I could only keep a *salon*. Why isn't it done? There is no Recamier nowadays; there is no Blessington. There is even no Whip's wife."

She was conscious of a faint shudder as she made this impudent stroke, and withdrew in a tremble into herself. She lay back in her chair, frightened. The words fell opportunely into Lord Hambleton's heart; he had no suspicion that they were deliberate, and the blood danced lightly along his arteries.

"You would hold a *salon* bravely," he said.

"Try me," she said with the affectation of playful laughter.

He laughed with her, and "Oh, we shall have everything out of you by-and-bye," said he. "We will bide our time. What we want just now more than anything is sound men. Now Mr. Rosewarne——"

"Poor Freddy is as sound as Big Ben, I suppose," said Mrs. Rosewarne, indifferently.

She felt the blood burning in her cheeks. Their eyes encountered. It seemed to him that they had a private secret together. He scarce knew what it was, so far had his sensations crowded upon his intelligence; but some connection, woven through the clatter of that public meal, held him and her in common. With her quick wit she was aware of his thought. She felt flushed with her own beauty. It was not of her husband he was thinking, and she was aware that he believed she too was not considering him. The understanding lay between themselves. She rose triumphant; her heart spoke in loud acclamations.

"Ah, well," she said, with a tiny sigh, "I must wait, then, for old age to found my *salon*."

"No," he replied, smiling at her; "and why? We must have your husband in the House. Then you may begin at once."

"My

"My husband!" she echoed, as though recalled to some vague and distasteful consideration.

"Yes. You must have this *salon*. It may save us."

She looked at him, as if in doubt. He rose beside her. He overtopped her by a head, and a certain strength about his forehead attracted her. Ah! If this had been her husband! The regret flashed and was gone.

"Come and tell him," she said suddenly.

He misinterpreted the fervour in her eyes. "When?" he asked.

"To-night," she murmured.

There was a momentary pause, and then, "To-night," he assented, taking her hand.

Mrs. Rosewarne moved easily within the retinue of her admirers in the drawing-room. She regarded the company with cool eyes of triumph. She held their gazes; the looks they passed upon her fed her complacency; she was sensible of her new distinction among them. And when, later, she returned to her house, she was still under the escort of success. The excitement ran like rich wine in her body, and under its stimulus her pale face was flushed with a tide of colour. She dressed for dinner, radiant, and crowned, as she conceived, with incomparable splendour. The presiding enthusiasm of her mind prevailed upon her beauty. In the glass she considered her looks, and smilingly softened the glory of her cheeks. Her thoughts reverted with amiable contempt to her husband, and in a measure he too was exalted in her own triumph. She descended the stairs, and swept into the dining-room in the full current of her happiness; and she had a sudden sense of repulse upon finding the room vacant.

"Where is your master?" she asked of the servant, who stood in observant silence at the further end of the room.

Williams had seen him come in an hour ago ; he had retired to his room. Should he go and inquire ?

"No : we will give him a few minutes," said she, seating herself.

She held communion with her own surprises. She anticipated his sensations ; if he had failed with Maclagan, she, at least, had had better fortune, and for a moment Freddy and she were wrapt in common fellowship, set upon a common course. But as the time wore on, and he made no appearance, she grew restless and fidgeted ; a little annoyance mingled with her good-humour ; the warmth of her success ebbed away. She despatched Williams to bring the laggard down, and when he had returned with the report that he could get no answer, she picked up her skirts, and with lowering brows herself undertook the mission.

Mrs. Rosewarne paused outside her husband's room, and knocked. There was no response, and turning the handle of the door impatiently, she entered. The lamp burned low, and Freddy lay upon the bed, sprawling in an attitude of graceless comfort. The noise of his hard breathing sounded in the chamber, and the odour of strong spirit filled the air. In an access of angry disgust she shook him by the shoulders, and he lifted a stupid face to her, his eyes shot with blood.

"Is it you, Dolly ?" he asked thickly.

Her voice rose on a high note of anger.

"Do you know that the gong has gone this half-hour ? Bah ! You have been drinking, you beast !"

He sat up, staring at her vacantly, and slowly his eyes grew quick with life and fury.

"And what the devil is it to you if I have ?" he said savagely. "Why, in hell's name, don't you leave me alone ? What are you

apparent connection. All the reserves of his nature were enrolled in that gallant essay to fence him from the Horror of his life, and hedge him safely about with casual trifles. Of a sudden he saw things clear about him. A certain bright wit shone in his soliloquies; he spoke with that incoherence and irresponsibility which begets sometimes effective phrasing. His wife considered him; the novelty of his conversation struck her, its frivolity took her with admiration. Slowly the barriers of her own reserve broke down, the sense of satisfaction in herself grew upon her, and by degrees her good-humour returned. She joined in his talk, laughed a little, was inspired by his mood into newer, fresher, wilder hopes. No word was said about the scene in the bedroom; it had dropped into past history, and their feet were set to the future. And when Williams was gone, she turned swiftly upon him, her zeal showing in her eyes.

"And now, Freddy," she said, "tell me all about Maclagan."

His face started into haggard lines; he lowered his eyes, and, with a short laugh, shook his head.

"Later; not now," he said. "You begin."

She laughed also. "I have seen Lord Hambleton," she said with a burst of excitement. "He is coming to-night." And watched upon his face for the effect.

"Oh, you clever girl!" he cried, his eyes smiling, his lips quivering slightly. "You clever girl."

Again she laughed. It almost seemed to her at that moment that she loved him.

"Ah, you would think so, if you knew how I managed it."

"But I know it, I know it," he cried, seizing her hand across the table. "You are as clever as you are beautiful."

He hardly recalled the point to which their conversation related; he was aware only of her proximity and her kindly eyes. She returned

returned the pressure of his fingers faintly, and looked at him thoughtfully.

"You look tired, Freddy," she said. "I'm afraid you've had a very wearisome day."

"Yes," he assented with a tiny laugh. "I have had a bad day."

"Tell me," she said abruptly, "what about Maclagan?"

He rose. "Come into the study, then," he said in another voice. "I can tell you better there."

She followed him, laying a hand lightly upon his shoulder. She took her seat within the comfortable armchair, stretching herself out, with her feet to the fire and the red light upon her face and bosom. Rosewarne leaned his elbow on the mantelpiece.

"Well?" she asked presently in a tone of invitation.

He started. "Dolly," he said slowly, "supposing I were—to die—would you——"

"Good gracious, Freddy, don't talk nonsense," she interrupted on his halting phrases. "We haven't come to talk about foolish things like that."

He made no answer, but stared harder into the fire. A sense of irritation grew upon Mrs. Rosewarne. Had he failed in his mission. If he had, at least she had succeeded in hers, and the thought consoled her.

"Now, let me hear all about it. Do be quick," she said.

He turned to her suddenly. "Dolly, you must answer me; please answer me," he cried in agitation. "You could not bear my death, could you? Say you couldn't."

"Of course not," she replied sharply. "Why in the name of all that is decent will you harp on that? Don't be morbid."

"It will have to come to that," he said brokenly.

"Pooh! Don't be foolish," she retorted. She regarded him critically.

critically. Even in the red light the colour of his face, which had fallen into ugly lines, repelled her. "Come, what is it? Is anything the matter with you? Have you seen your doctor? What are you keeping from me?"

The questions ran off her tongue sharply, even acrimoniously. She had anew the sense of irritation that he had chosen this hour to be ill.

"No," he replied in a blank voice, "I suppose I'm all right. I don't know. I've been—yes—I'm ill with the horrible trouble. I'm——" He fell quickly upon his knees, burying his face in her gown. "Oh, Dolly, Dolly," he sobbed, "I have ruined you, and you don't know it. It is all over—all over."

Her eyes opened in alarm, but she did not move. "What nonsense are you talking, Freddy?" she asked in an uncertain voice which rang harshly. "You're ill. You've been overworking. You mustn't. What foolishness!"

She laughed faintly, with embarrassment, and almost mechanically put out a hand and touched his hair as though vaguely to reassure him of his mistake; while all the time her heart thumped on and her mind was wondering in a daze.

At her touch he raised his head, and clutched her, crying, "Ah, you do love me, Dolly. You do love me. I knew you loved me. I knew you would be sorry for me."

She sat motionless, fear reaching out arms for her heart. Slowly she was beginning to understand.

"What is it that you have done?" she asked in a dry voice.

He pressed her hand tightly, crushing her fingers. "I have taken money," he whispered, "trust money. I am ruined. I must go to prison, unless I——"

She moistened her lips, impassive as ever.

"But you do love me," he repeated, clinging to her. "Yes, you

you do love me, Dolly. Even if I have to do—that thing, you love me still."

Through all her being ran a repulsion for this creature at her knees, but she was clogged with her emotions and sat silent.

"Dolly, Dolly," he cried pathetically. "I shall have to do it. I know I shall have to do it—I——" He looked up, gulping down his sobs, as though seeking in her face for a contradiction. He knew the warm tears would fall upon him. Through his blurred vision he saw her mutely, indistinctly, raise her arms, extracting her hand from his grasp. He felt—he knew—he hoped—— Ah, she would throw them about his neck and draw him close in a passionate, pitiful embrace.

"Dolly, Dolly," he whispered, "I shall have to die."

With a rough movement she thrust him from her and got upon her feet.

"Die!" she exclaimed in a voice full of ineffable bitterness. "Die! Oh, my God, yes. That is the least you can do."

He lay where he had fallen to her push, huddled in a shapeless heap, stirring faintly. It was to her eyes as if some vermin upon which she had set her foot still moved with life. There was left in him no power of thought, no capacity of emotion. He was dimly conscious of misery, and he knew that she was standing by. Far away a tune sounded, and reverberated in his ears; it was the singing of the empty air. She was staring upon him with disgust and terror.

"Poor worm!" she said in tense low tones; and then her eyes alighted on her heaving bosom and the glories of her gown. The revulsion struck her like a blow, and she reeled under it. "You devil!" she cried. "You have ruined my life."

The sound of those sharp words smote upon his brain, and whipped

whipped his ragged soul. He rose suddenly to his feet, his face blazing with fury.

"Damn you," he cried passionately. "I have loved you. I have sold my soul for you. I have ruined my mind for you. Damn you, Dorothy. And you have no words for me. Damn you."

His voice trailed away into a tremulous sob, and he stood contemplating her with fixed eyes. She laughed hardly, withdrawing her skirts from his vicinity. His gaze wandered from her, and went furtively towards the mantelpiece. She followed it, and saw a revolver lying upon the marble.

"Bah!" she said. "You have not the courage."

At that moment a knock fell upon the door; after a pause she moved and opened it.

"Lord Hambleton, ma'am," said Williams. "He is in the drawing-room."

Breathing hard, she looked round at her husband. Rosewarne's dull eyes were fixed upon her. They interceded with her; they fawned upon her.

"I will be there in a moment," she said clearly. Rosewarne moved slowly to the table and sat down, resting his head in his hands. He made no protest; if he realised anything now, he realised that he had expected this. The door shut to behind her; a dull pain started in the base of his brain; into the redoubts of his soul streamed swiftly the forces of sheer panic.

Mrs. Rosewarne entered the drawing-room, the tail of her dress rustling over the carpet. Lord Hambleton turned with this sound in his ears, stirring him pleasantly.

"Well," said he, smiling, "you see I've come."

She gave him her hand and paused, confronting him. Her heart thumped like a hammer upon her side; her face was flushed with colour, and her lips quivered.

"It

"It is good of you," she said tremulously; "won't you sit down?"

He did not heed her invitation, but shot a shrewd glance at her. Her voice startled him; the discomposure of her appearance arrested his eyes. He wondered what had happened. It could not be that his visit was the cause of this confusion. And yet he noted it with a thrill of satisfaction, such as he had experienced in the colloquy at Mrs. Charters's.

"You are very good to look at like this," he allowed himself to say. He picked up the thread of their communion where it had been dropped earlier that day. She was marvellously handsome; he had never admired a woman so much since his youth. The faint light spreading from the lamps illumined her brilliant face and threw up her figure in a kind of twilight against the wall.

Her heart palpitated audibly; it seemed to her that she had a sudden unreasonable desire to laugh. The squalid gloom of that chamber beyond lifted; it seemed remote and accidental. She was here with the comfortable eyes of this man upon her, contemplating her with admiration. She was not a parcel of that tragedy outside. She smiled broadly.

"Why, the better for my *salon*," she said.

What had excited her? he asked himself. "Ah! we will arrange all that," he answered with a familiar nod.

"You will?" she asked eagerly—breathlessly.

"Why, certainly," he replied. "I think we can manage it—between us."

She laughed aloud this time. "Yes, both of us together," she said.

He met her eyes. Was it wine? he asked. Or was it——? Lord Hambleton's body tingled with sensation. He had not suspected that matters had progressed so intimately between them.

Almost

Almost involuntarily he put out a hand towards her. She laughed awkwardly, and he drew it back.

"You should have had it long ago," he said. "You have thrown away a chance."

"My life, you mean," she cried, breaking in upon his mellifluous tones with a harsher note.

She shifted her head towards the door as if listening for a sound. Her action struck him for the moment as ungainly.

"Things do not always fall out as we want them," he said slowly.

"Not as you want them?" she asked, coming back to regard him. "Why, what more do you want?"

He watched her from his quiet eyes, which suddenly lost their equable expression. To him she had always appeared a woman of dispassion, but now the seeming surrender in her mind, the revolution in her character, flashed upon him with an extreme sense of emotion. His heart beat faster.

"I think you know," he said softly, and reaching forth, took her hand.

Swiftly she turned; a look of dread rushed into her eyes. All on a sudden the transactions of that neighbouring room leapt into proximity. She saw Freddy handling the revolver; she watched him lean over the table and cock it in the light; she saw him—— She gave a cry, and moved a step towards the door, with a frightened face.

"What is it?" asked Lord Hambleton in alarm. "You are ill. You——" She made no answer, and he seized her hand again. "Let me ring for a glass of wine," he whispered.

Mrs. Rosewarne laughed loudly in his face.

"No, no," she said; "it is nothing. Pray, don't. I shall be better."

She

She looked at him, and then turned her ear to the door again, listening with a white face. He watched her anxiously, but in his own mind the reason of her perturbation was clear. The thought was sweet to him.

"Well," said he; "and now to business."

"Business!" she echoed, and moved quickly to him, "I—— Please, you must excuse me, Lord Hambleton. My husband is ill. Do you mind? I——"

He rose abruptly. "I am very sorry," he said; "I will not trouble you, then, just now."

He took his hat. She had turned away and was hearkening with all her senses for that report that did not come. He bit his lips. Perhaps she had been overstrained. He could scarce say what feeling ran uppermost in his mind. She hurried him to the door, accompanying him herself.

"Must you go?" she asked, stupidly, on the doorstep.

He looked at her; perhaps she really was ill. But she was very beautiful. She did not hear his answer. The rough wind blew through the open door and scattered her hair and her skirts. Lord Hambleton went down the steps. She watched him go. At that moment, somehow, a great revulsion overwhelmed her. She had listened, and there had been no discharge. What a fool she had been! Of course, he had no courage. She had the desire to rush after Lord Hambleton and call him back. She had tortured herself idly; she had played a silly part in a melodrama. She recalled Lord Hambleton's ardent gaze. There was a man! Ah, if this thing were not fastened about her neck! She stole back along the hall—furious. Once more she was confronted with the squalor of her position. Her indignation rose higher; she could see that pitiful creature crying for mercy, crying for affection. Bah! He was too cowardly to die. Burning with the old anger, she crossed

crossed to the study and opened the door. She would have it out with him; they should understand their position. With Lord Hambleton the dignified prospects of her life had vanished, and she was flung back upon a mean and ignominious lot.

Rosewarne was seated in the armchair; the revolver rested where it had lain upon the mantelpiece. He made no movement to rise as she returned, and she stood for a second looking down upon him from behind with curling lips. A bottle of whisky and a glass stood upon the table at his elbow. It was probable that he had drunk himself to sleep.

"Are you awake?" she called sharply. He made no sign. She bent over angrily and shook him.

His head fell to her touch, and from his fingers a little phial tumbled upon the floor.

Mars

A Medley

By Rose Haig Thomas

Not this cold grey world for me
With its dull monotony
Of sombre land and sea.

No ! a mad career
In another sphere,
Rather than linger here.

Then heigh for rosy Mars !
The king of all the stars !
Where prisms play
Pranks with the day—
There would I stay,
Where light is dark, and darkness bright,
And wisdom folly, weakness might.
Where right is wrong, and wrong made right,
Where night is day, and day is night,
And the night glows rich with a warm red light.

So

So heigh for rosy Mars
The king of all the stars!
Where purple fish leap in a scarlet sea,
In sportive play;
Where deep waves roll, wine-red as Burgundy.
Throughout the day
Across the blazing heavens sails an azure sun;
How his cerulean shades
Melt into mauve among the rosy blades!
And blood-red trees their golden shadows write
Over the violet glades.

There winged beings green as malachite
Flit in and out the cooling turquoise light
At the high noon.
And when the sun sets deeply darkly blue,
Bathing the bloody blades in opal dew,
Falls on a scarlet world a golden night,
Wherein slow riseth into sight
No pale-faced moon.
With giddy circlings, a strange steel-blue
And star-shaped satellite
Whirls through the golden blare.
As nervous starfish shun the touch,
So shoot her shrinking fingers forth,
Point East and South, point West and North,
Her mazy moving radiants such
A thousand changes wear.
They flash from her steely shield
Like a myriad scimitars,
As she laces her golden field

With its splutter of blue black stars.
Thus is the gamut set
From palest orange unto purplest jet.

Then the malachite beings grow glittering bronze
With feeling, with passion, agleam, aglow,
In touch with their molten rosy world.
Green fire flashes from their jewelled breasts,
Where flame a thousand ages,
Whilst their broad pinions spread, quiver to the quill.
Forth from each beauteous head leap forked tongues;
A rushing sound as music of a stream
Stirs the still air with sweet strange speech

That writes its meanings on the atmosphere.
The flashing hieroglyphics scintillate,
Among the purple shades, fork-lightning quick.
Between the waving wings
The younger beings feel and see and hear,
And on their brain the branded image sinks
Of quiv'ring naked knowledge newly born.
The seeming solid ground uncertain heaves,
Stretching to slender threads the pliant chain,
The easy fetters of a lessened gravity.
These buoyant beings rise and madly dance
Wide stepping as the winds, their waving wings
Mingling in one green cloud,
Which bronzing in the golden night
Drifts out of sight.

* * * * *

Gone

Gone is the scarlet sea,
The azure day,
And my rainbow reverie
Fades into grey.



Souvenir de Paris

By Charles Conder





The Auction Room of Letters

By Arthur Waugh

"THE present position of the literary man in England is very much that of an auctioneer. He offers his goods for sale; other people, middlemen, come and bid for them, and the prize goes to the highest bidder." I have not the exact words by me as I write; nor, in a case of this sort, do exact words matter very greatly. It is at least true that to this effect, and essentially with this intention, a leading man of letters has within the last month delivered himself upon the art which he espouses, that he asks us to accept, as an illustration or parallelism, this comparison of his calling with the huckstering of the auctioneer, and that such a pronouncement appears, if one may conjecture assent from a harmonious silence, to be received without disapproval by a large number of his fellow-artists.

Now in the *obiter dicta* of distinguished men there is often more food for reflection than is evident at first sight, and this playful—or was it perhaps a reproachful?—metaphor of auctioneer and public, carries a good deal more of import on its back than "many such like as'es of great charge," which are bruited abroad into fame from day to day. It contains in little the whole story of the present position of authorship; it reflects the past, it forebodes the future, and it adorns its tale by pointing a strenuous

 moral

moral which these few pages will do their best to indicate. For the situation, which one is first inclined to laugh away as ridiculous, has its serious side as well, and it is a question whether the time has not arrived when we should take the literary auctioneer at his own valuation, and write him off the books.

The first thing that strikes one, I suppose, is the consideration of how immensely things have changed in the last few years to make such utterance as that which opens this paper possible. Except for a few dingy and detached houses here and there, houses which seem to break out in the centre of our trim red-brick lines of villadom—like ghosts to trouble joy—except for these (and they are few), Grub Street is no more. We all remember, or our fathers at least have declared unto us, the old-world vision of the publisher. He was a Colossus, set up at the receipt of custom, under whose huge legs the wretched authors, petty men, peeped about, striving to rivet his attention with humble tributes of carefully copied manuscript. For such as he regarded there remained hard terms and an invidious reputation. To-day all this is changed. It is now the author (have we not received it on his own authority?) who mounts into the rostrum, hammer in hand, and having at his side a bundle of type-writing, distributes to the struggling middlemen a printed synopsis of the material on offer, and proceeds to start the bidding with a wholesome reserve price. Then the publishers continue one against the other, pitting royalty against royalty, advance against advance, till down comes the hammer and off go the copy and the profits. Nor, mark you, is the auctioneer contented yet; the open market, he says, is still not open enough for his desires. It seems that these men of business do not know the secrets of their own beggarly trade (have we not this, too, on the authority of the author?). They are the victims of a miserable niggardliness which forbids them to bid to the value of the material

material. Soon the auctioneer will do without them. He will out into the square, with twenty thousand copies of his novel in bales behind him, and will sell them to the surging public himself, like a cheap-jack on bank holiday. Then, even if he tires in the mid-summer heat, and is so sadly overwrought at night that his hand declines the pen, he will still have had his reward, he will have sold himself without favour, and the family stocking will gape with shekels. Faugh! "an ounce of civet, good apothecary!" The air grows heavy.

We have had enough, I fancy, of this picture. In drawing it, I doubt not, the author who is responsible for my elaboration did so with more sincere regret for current circumstances than could ever be felt by an alien to his art; he merely stated a fact, and that indisputable. There is, moreover, no possible profit in lingering over trivial bickerings which the complacency of one party and the self-advertisement of another have dragged into the full view of the public press. Here, at least, the future may be trusted to take care of its own; there can be but one end. The purpose of this paper is otherwise. It may be well, perhaps, to consider by what steps the author reached the rostrum, what he is doing there for art, and where he will find himself when in the whirligig of time he is forced to descend. Finally, it may be asked how all this is likely to serve letters in the future, and what sort of literature is likely to be produced under such conditions. For every man who sets pen to paper, be he Laureate or the humblest journalist, *must*, so far as he is worthy of his calling, prefer the welfare of literature to the gains of his own exchequer, and much of the lamentable policy which has ushered in this new era of letters has been due, it is but fair to suppose, to an honest but misdirected desire to further her claims to recognition. Is she, then, we may ask, likely to benefit by

novel. For the present context this must be the case. The concerns of the auction-room are so far centred upon fiction alone. For, as we have already noticed, this activity of the middleman is necessarily dependent on the demand of the mob, and while it is probable that more books are being read in this year of grace than in any of its predecessors, it is also certain that at no time has the general public been so blind to the claims of literary merit. For poetry it has no taste and absolutely no judgment. If it is told sufficiently often that a certain poem is fine literature, it will in time come to believe it, much as it takes its religious tenets on trust, because it has heard them so often promulgated. In neither case can it appreciate for itself. For criticism, sociology, philosophy it has no ear; it seeks amusement, and it buys the latest story. Hence it comes that it is the field of fiction alone that is given over to profitable money-making; hence, too, it follows that the successful novelist has come to regard the six-shilling novel as the only vehicle of literary expression, and has taken himself rather more seriously than circumstances have demanded.

Nevertheless, from a purely insular point of view he is, beyond doubt, a very important person. It is ungracious in an Englishman to reflect, even in passing, upon his motherland, still it is difficult to avoid the confession that Napoleon's definition of us was regrettably true in its essentials. We are, by nature, a nation of shopkeepers, and the thing that sells best among us has gained a spurious but incalculable importance. The novelist, therefore, has now his day, and he is making the best of it. He looms large in the public gaze: he fills columns of the public prints: the work he produces is, by virtue of its popularity, *the* literature of the hour. It only remains to concede the situation, and to consider whether, under the progress of present circumstances, it is likely to be the literature of the future.

A literary

A literary critic, himself no less distinguished than the novelist whose words are serving us for a text, has recently expressed his view of the probable complications in store for the novelist. He said, if my memory stands good, that the prevalence of the pecuniary estimate was resulting in a pressure all along the line, that the author, in demanding high terms of the publisher, was pressing him to such a degree that he was, in turn, forced to press the bookseller, and that the final result would be that the public would refuse to respond, and that the old machinery would be thrown out of gear. Well, there may be truth in this, but there is a good deal to be said on the other side. The publisher, after all, is no sucking-dove, no shorn lamb which needs our poor protection, if his grasp of business principles is insufficient to keep him out of unprofitable bargains, he can only thank his own indiscretion if he finds himself in eventual liquidation. He starts business as a business-man, and as a business-man he must be judged. He is fairly sure to take care of himself. On the contrary, it is the novelist who must look to his own interests: for it is they and not the publishers that are in jeopardy. We have seen how this eternal care for pence results in injudicious contracts; let us now see whether these contracts will not, in reaction, end in a lack even of those miserable pence for which they were contrived. We are all slow to learn by experience, but really the tardiness of the novelist is amazing. You would suppose that, with the field of literature scattered, as it is, with dead and dying reputations, the author would begin to lose some confidence in the constancy of his public, but it is just this fickleness that he is slowest to comprehend. He makes one immense, phenomenal success, and in a flash the world is all before him. He will plant vineyards and oliveyards, he will store up his grain in goodly garners; he will live happily for ever after. And all the while at his

his ear Experience is whispering unheard, "Thou fool! this night shall thy fame be required of thee."

The British public is the most fickle body that ever drew together for mutual protection, and in nothing is it more fickle than in its literary predilections. The idol of its afternoon is an outcast by sunset, and the only possibility of retaining its favour lies in an assiduous and heart-whole study of its inclination. The novelist who is to continue popular must work with every instinct clear, every faculty alive; he must change his course and tack with the popular breeze; his eye must follow every cloud, be it no larger than a man's hand, for the least shadow on the horizon grows in an hour into a tempest. During the last few years there has been success upon success that promised stability: one reputation has trod upon another's heels, has passed, and lost outline. There is scarcely a prominent novelist of twelve years ago who enjoys an equal favour to-day. All this your optimist adventurer forgets. He forgets, too, that those grinding contracts of his will press upon him at the very hour when he is least in trim for work, that in their obligation he is bound, in course of time, to turn out material unworthy of his best, and that the public, reminded of this by its critics—reminded, too, by a certain sense of selection which, to do it justice, it has acquired in its study of fiction—will have no compunction, in the hour of his distress, in bowing him to the door. Then the publisher, too, will desert his auction-room, and his occupation will be gone.

You cannot serve Art and Mammon; indeed, it is hard enough to serve Mammon alone, for any length of time, with any consistency of return. And if the novelist is likely, by mixing himself overmuch with business interests to compass his own financial ruin, is it probable that he will contrive, in the stress of his daily avocations of the rostrum, to leave behind him the name of an artist,

artist, a reputation that can endure? No man deserving the name of author ever yet wrote a book without some faint hope that it might outlast himself; that he might be raising, if not the fabric, at least the pedestal of a "monument more enduring than brass." Yet no book ever lived, it is safe to say, that was thrown off in feverish haste to satisfy the demands of an importunate publisher. Nowadays, the word 'Dignity' is supposed to carry with it the trail of the prig: still, every profession, sincerely followed, is capable of dignified repute. Where, then, in all this turmoil of the market, is the boasted dignity of letters?

If ever a calling existed in England whose record was studded with things noble and of good report, it is the calling that can boast the service of Shakspeare, of Milton, of Goldsmith, and of Wordsworth. Surely the shadows of the great must move restlessly in shame by Stratford Church and Chalfont stream when they learn that the literary man is, upon his own confession and at his own desire, translated into an unctuous auctioneer. But shame should not be confined to the dead: it is high time that it infected the living. There are signs, fortunately, that it is even now doing so. It may be, indeed, that we ourselves are beginning to appreciate that the new era of letters is not so much decadent as vulgar; it may even prove that the next development of the problem will be a return to taste and a recrudescence of dignity. If so, the uses of perversity will have gained another example, and the cause of literature will have been served by what at present appears the least promising of its issues.


WILFRID SIGLE

The Crimson Weaver

By R. Murray Gilchrist

My Master and I had wandered from our track and lost ourselves on the side of a great "edge." It was a two-days' journey from the Valley of the Willow Brakes, and we had roamed aimlessly; eating at hollow-echoing inns where grey-haired hostesses ministered, and sleeping side by side through the dewless midsummer nights on beds of fresh-gathered heather.

Beyond a single-arched wall-less bridge that crossed a brown stream whose waters leaped straight from the upland, we reached the Domain of the Crimson Weaver. No sooner had we reached the keystone when a beldam, wrinkled as a walnut and bald as an egg, crept from a cabin of turf and osier and held out her hands in warning.

"Enter not the Domain of the Crimson Weaver!" she shrieked. "One I loved entered.—I am here to warn men. Behold, I was beautiful once!"

She tore her ragged smock apart and discovered the foulness of her bosom, where the heart pulsed behind a curtain of livid skin. My Master drew money from his wallet and scattered it on the ground.

"She is mad," he said. "The evil she hints cannot exist. There is no fiend."

So

So we passed on, but the bridge-keeper took no heed of the coins. For awhile we heard her bellowed sighs issuing from the openings of her den.

Strangely enough, the tenour of our talk changed from the moment that we left the bridge. He had been telling me of the Platonists, but when our feet pressed the sun-dried grass I was impelled to question him of love. It was the first time I had thought of the matter.

"How does passion first touch a man's life?" I asked, laying my hand on his arm.

His ruddy colour faded, he smiled wryly.

"You divine what passes in my brain," he replied. "I also had begun to meditate. . . . . But I may not tell you. . . . . In my boyhood—I was scarce older than you at the time—I loved the true paragon. 'Twere sacrilege to speak of the birth of passion. Let it suffice that ere I tasted of wedlock the woman died, and her death sealed for ever the door of that chamber of my heart. . . . . Yet, if one might see therein, there is an altar crowned with ever-burning tapers and with wreaths of unwithering asphodels."

By this time we had reached the skirt of a yew-forest, traversed in every direction by narrow paths. The air was moist and heavy, but ever and anon a light wind touched the tree-tops and bowed them, so that the pollen sank in golden veils to the ground.

Everywhere we saw half-ruined fountains, satyrs vomiting senilely, nymphs emptying wine upon the lambent flames of dying phœnixes, creatures that were neither satyrs nor nymphs, nor gryphins, but grotesque adminglings of all, slain by one another, with water gushing from wounds in belly and thigh.

At length the path we had chosen terminated beside an oval mere that was surrounded by a colonnade of moss-grown arches.

arches. Huge pike quivered on the muddy bed, crayfish moved sluggishly amongst the weeds.

There was an island in the middle, where a leaden Diana, more compassionate than a crocodile, caressed Actæon's horns ere delivering him to his hounds. The huntress' head and shoulders were white with the excrement of a crowd of culvers that moved as if entangled in a snare.

Northwards an avenue rose for the space of a mile, to fall abruptly before an azure sky. For many years the yew-mast on the pathway had been undisturbed by human foot; it was covered with a crust of greenish lichen.

My Master pressed my fingers. "There is some evil in the air of this place," he said. "I am strong, but you—you may not endure. We will return."

"'Tis an enchanted country," I made answer, feverishly. "At the end of yonder avenue stands the palace of the sleeping maiden who awaits the kiss. Nay, since we have pierced the country thus far, let us not draw back. You are strong, Master—no evil can touch us."

So we fared to the place where the avenue sank, and then our eyes fell on the wondrous sight of a palace, lying in a concave pleasaunce, all treeless, but so bestarred with fainting flowers, that neither blade of grass nor grain of earth was visible.

Then came a rustling of wings above our heads, and looking skywards I saw flying towards the house a flock of culvers like unto those that had drawn themselves over Diana's head. The hindmost bird dropped its neck, and behold it gazed upon us with the face of a mannikin!

"They are charmed birds, made thus by the whim of the Princess," I said.

As the birds passed through the portals of a columbary that crowned

crowned a western tower, their white wings beat against a silver bell that glistened there, and the whole valley was filled with music.

My Master trembled and crossed himself. "In the name of our Mother," he exclaimed, "let us return. I dare not trust your life here."

But a great door in front of the palace swung open, and a woman with a swaying walk came out to the terrace. She wore a robe of crimson worn into tatters at skirt-hem and shoulders. She had been forewarned of our presence, for her face turned instantly in our direction. She smiled subtly, and her smile died away into a most tempting sadness.

She caught up such remnants of her skirt as trailed behind, and strutted about with the gait of a peacock. As the sun touched the glossy fabric I saw eyes inwrought in deeper hue.

My Master still trembled, but he did not move, for the gaze of the woman was fixed upon him. His brows twisted and his white hair rose and stood erect, as if he viewed some unspeakable horror.

Stooping, with sidelong motions of the head, she approached; bringing with her the smell of such an incense as when amidst Eastern herbs burns the corse. . . . . She was perfect of feature as the Diana, but her skin was deathly white and her lips fretted with pain.

She took no heed of me, but knelt at my Master's feet—a Magdalene before an impregnable priest.

"Prince and Lord, Tower of Chastity, hear!" she murmured. "For lack of love I perish. See my robe in tatters!"

He strove to avert his face, but his eyes still dwelt upon her. She half rose and shook nut-brown tresses over his knees.

Youth came back in a flood to my Master. His shrivelled skin

skin filled out; the dying sunlight turned to gold the whiteness of his hair. He would have raised her had I not caught his hands. The anguish of foreboding made me cry:

"One forces roughly the door of your heart's chamber. The wreaths wither, the tapers bend and fall."

He grew old again. The Crimson Weaver turned to me.

"O marplot!" she said laughingly, "think not to vanquish me with folly. I am too powerful. Once that a man enter my domain he is mine."

But I drew my Master away.

"'Tis I who am strong," I whispered. "We will go hence at once. Surely we may find our way back to the bridge. The journey is easy."

The woman, seeing that the remembrance of an old love was strong within him, sighed heavily, and returned to the palace. As she reached the doorway the valves opened, and I saw in a distant chamber beyond the hall an ivory loom with a golden stool.

My Master and I walked again on the track we had made in the yew-mast. But twilight was falling, and ere we could reach the pool of Diana all was in utter darkness; so at the foot of a tree, where no anthill rose, we lay down and slept.

Dreams came to me—gorgeous visions from the romances of eld. Everywhere I sought vainly for a beloved. There was the Castle of the Ebony Dwarf, where a young queen reposed in the innermost casket of the seventh crystal cabinet; there was the Chamber of Gloom, where Lenore danced, and where I groped for ages around columns of living flesh; there was the White Minaret, where twenty-one princesses poised themselves on balls of burnished bronze; there was Melisandra's arbour, where the sacred toads crawled over the enchanted cloak.

Unrest fretted me: I woke in spiritual pain. Dawn was breaking—a bright yellow dawn, and the glades were full of vapours.

I turned to the place where my Master had lain. He was not there. I felt with my hands over his bed: it was key-cold. Terror of my loneliness overcame me, and I sat with covered face.

On the ground near my feet lay a broken riband, whereon was strung a heart of chrysolite. It enclosed a knot of ash-coloured hair—hair of the girl my Master had loved.

The mists gathered together and passed sunwards in one long many-cornered veil. When the last shred had been drawn into the great light, I gazed along the avenue, and saw the topmost bartizan of the Crimson Weaver's palace.

It was midday ere I dared start on my search. The culvers beat about my head. I walked in pain, as though giant spiders had woven about my body.

On the terrace strange beasts—dogs and pigs with human limbs, —tore ravenously at something that lay beside the balustrade. At sight of me they paused and lifted their snouts and bayed. Awhile afterwards the culvers rang the silver bell, and the monsters dispersed hurriedly amongst the drooping blossoms of the pleasaunce, and where they had swarmed I saw naught but a steaming sanguine pool.

I approached the house and the door fell open, admitting me to a chamber adorned with embellishments beyond the witchery of art. There I lifted my voice and cried eagerly: "My Master, my Master, where is my Master?" The alcoves sent out a babble of echoes, blended together like a harp-cord on a dulcimer: "My Master, my Master, where is my Master? For the love of Christ, where is my Master?" The echo replied only, "Where is my Master?"

Above,

Above, swung a globe of topaz, where a hundred suns gambolled. From its centre a convoluted horn, held by a crimson cord, sank lower and lower. It stayed before my lips and I blew therein, and heard the sweet voices of youth chant with one accord.

"Fall open, oh doors: fall open and show the way to the princess!"

Ere the last of the echoes had died a vista opened, and at the end of an alabaster gallery I saw the Crimson Weaver at her loom. She had doffed her tattered robe for one new and lustrous as freshly drawn blood. And marvellous as her beauty had seemed before, its wonder was now increased a hundredfold.

She came towards me with the same stately walk, but there was now a lightness in her demeanour that suggested the growth of wings.

Within arm's length she curtseyed, and curtseying showed me the firmness of her shoulders, the fulness of her breast. The sight brought no pleasure: my cracking tongue appealed in agony:

"My Master, where is my Master?"

She smiled happily. "Nay, do not trouble. He is not here. His soul talks with the culvers in the cote. He has forgotten you. In the night we supped, and I gave him of Nepenthe."

"Where is my Master? Yesterday he told me of the shrine in his heart—of ever-fresh flowers—of a love dead yet living."

Her eyebrows curved mirthfully.

"'Tis foolish boys' talk," she said. "If you sought till the end of time you would never find him—unless I chose. Yet—if you buy of me—myself to name the price."

I looked around hopelessly at the unimaginable riches of her home. All that I have is this Manor of the Willow Brakes—a moorish park, an ancient house where the thatch gapes and the casements swing loose.

"My

"My possessions are pitiable," I said, "but they are all yours. I give all to save him."

"Fool, fool!" she cried. "I have no need of gear. If I but raise my hand, all the riches of the world fall to me. 'Tis not what I wish for."

Into her eyes came such a glitter as the moon makes on the moist skin of a sleeping snake. The firmness of her lips relaxed; they grew child-like in their softness. The atmosphere became almost tangible: I could scarce breathe.

"What is it? All that I can do, if it be no sin."

"Come with me to my loom," she said, "and if you do the thing I desire you shall see him. There is no evil in't—in past times kings have sighed for the same."

So I followed slowly to the loom, before which she had seated herself, and watched her deftly passing crimson thread over crimson thread.

She was silent for a space, and in that space her beauty fascinated me, so that I was no longer master of myself.

"What you wish for I will give, even if it be life."

The loom ceased. "A kiss of the mouth, and you shall see him who passed in the night."

She clasped her arms about my neck and pressed my lips. For one moment heaven and earth ceased to be; but there was one paradise, where we were sole governours. . . . .

Then she moved back and drew aside the web and showed me the head of my Master, and the bleeding heart whence a crimson cord unravelled into many threads.

"I wear men's lives," the woman said. "Life is necessary to me, or even I—who have existed from the beginning—must die. But yesterday I feared the end, and he came. His soul is not dead—'tis truth that it plays with my culvers."

I fell

I fell back.

"Another kiss," she said. "Unless I wish, there is no escape for you. Yet you may return to your home, though my power over you shall never wane. Once more—lip to lip."

I crouched against the wall like a terrified dog. She grew angry ; her eyes darted fire.

"A kiss," she cried, "for the penalty!"

My poor Master's head, ugly and cadaverous, glared from the loom. I could not move.

The Crimson Weaver lifted her skirt, uncovering feet shapen as those of a vulture. I fell prostrate. With her claws she fumbled about the flesh of my breast. Moving away she bade me pass from her sight. . . . .

So, half-dead, I lie here at the Manor of the Willow Brakes, watching hour by hour the bloody clew ever unwinding from my heart and passing over the western hills to the Palace of the Siren.
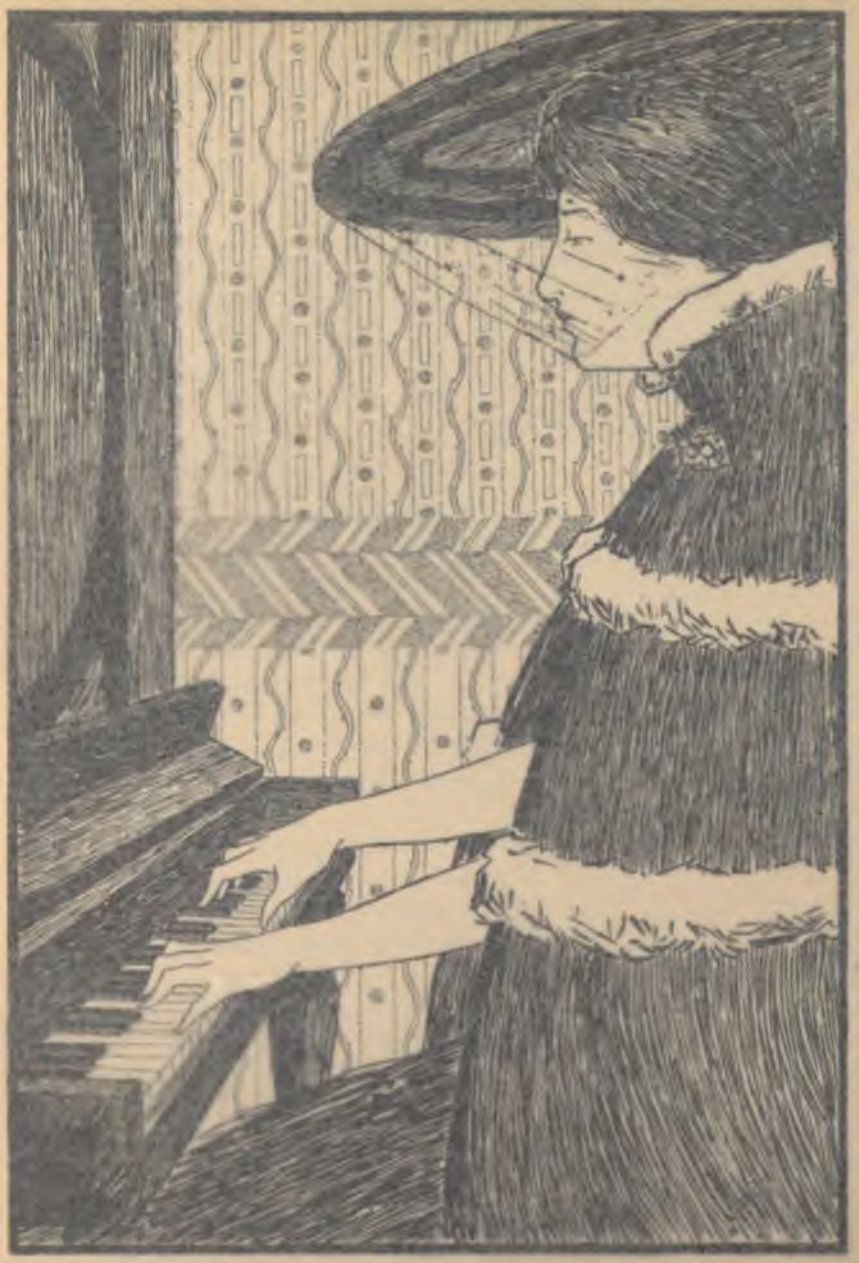
Two Pictures

By Fred Hyland

I. The Mirror

II. Keynotes









The Digger

From the Portuguese of Guerra Junqueiro

By Edgar Prestage

THE cock crows this December night . . .
The cock crows hoarsely this dark night . . .
—Misery ! oh, misery !
Villager sleep not ! Call the wight . . .
Black sorrow, hasten, call the wight ! . . .
—Misery ! oh, misery !
The digger is thy slave of right,
Out with his hoe, for he of right,
Black sorrow, is a slave to thee !

Howls the wind, the nests are shaking . . .
In dread night the nests are shaking . . .
—Misery ! oh, misery !
Cold as ermine snow is flaking . . .
In the dusk the snow is flaking . . .
—Misery ! oh, misery !
Maledict his way is making,
Hoe on shoulder he is making,
That digger, a dark phantom he !

The

The morning star doth purple grow . . .
The morning star doth pallid grow . . .
—Misery ! oh, misery !
The hills are bare, the frost below,
And stiff as bronze the frost below ! . . .
—Misery ! oh, misery !
How grimly bends he o'er his hoe,
And tears and trenches with his hoe,
That digger, a dark phantom he !

He digs and digs from dawn of day
Until the stroke of middle day . . .
—Misery ! oh, misery !
Then standing, sadly sets to pray,
Upon the lonely slope to pray,
—Misery ! oh, misery !
And putting down his hoe to say
" Hail Mary ! " silently to say,
That digger, a dark phantom he !

He digs the savage mountainside,
From dawn to even, the mountainside . . .
—Misery ! oh, misery !
And with some broth Thou dost requite
Him, God ! and with six bairns requite,
—Misery ! oh, misery !
The Angelus rings through the night,
" Blessed be Thou, Heavenly Sire, this night ! "
The digger cries, a phantom he !

Ten hills are dug . . . where is the wheat?
Six mouths begotten . . . where is the wheat?
—Misery! oh, misery!
Upon his door comes Hunger's beat,
And Death's re-echoing the beat . . .
—Misery! oh, misery!
"The peace of God, I now entreat!
The peace of God, I now entreat!"
The digger sighed, and ceased to dree!

A Pen-and-Ink Effect

By Frances E. Huntley

He was writing a letter, and, as his pen jerked over the paper, he smiled with a fatuous softness. She had betrayed herself so helplessly—had cared so much. And he? Well, yes, he had cared, too, a little; who could have been quite unresponsive to that impetuous inquiring tenderness, that ardent generous admiration? He remembered it all, with amused regretful vanity—the summer evenings by the window, the gay give-and-take of their talk, the graver moments when their eyes met, and hers spoke more eloquently than words. "Eager tell-tales of her mind"—how often he had quoted Matthew Arnold's line when he thought of her eyes! It might have been written for her; and when he had told her so, she had not been angry. Little goose! She ought to have been, of course—but he might say anything, he knew.

Well! they had been pretty days, those; "a fragrant memory"—(she had taught him some of her phrases)—and now they were over. Quite over! The involuntariness of his sigh pleased him, and the reluctance with which he took up his pen again seemed to complete the romance of the moment.

She knew already. That was certain; he had sent a telegram on his wedding-day, thinking it might not be quite so bad if she knew he had thought of her even then. And now he was writing. Not

Not to her—dear, no! he had too much tact, knowledge of the world, for *that*, he hoped; but to her father. They had been "pals"; he was so much older than she, "quite fatherly," he used to say, delighting in her conscious look. . . . . So it was natural, quite natural, for him to write and tell him how it had happened.

For in some ways it was a queer business, not quite what had been expected of him, and yet—what every one had expected. *That* he knew, and it galled him sorely. It was hardly a *mésalliance*, but—a mistake? He felt that it might be called one; a horrid saying jingled in his ears, "There's no fool like an old fool"—and yet he had chosen it so, always guessed that it would end so. Romantic? No! There was the sting—not even romantic.

But she? Would she look at it in that way? Would she smile and think that he had made a mess of it, compare herself mentally—her fastidious high-bred self—with his bride and—pity him? He moved restlessly. No, she wouldn't; he knew her better. She would mind—mind horribly. Her mouth would set itself, her eyes would look bright and pained—oh! she was brave enough; but she would be silent, sadder than her wont, and—envious? His smile grew broader. Poor little dear!

Well, his letter would be some comfort. He had finished it; now to read it over. . . . . Yes! all was admirably conveyed, the regret, the remembrance, the veiled messages to her, the (he rather liked this part)—the hinted depreciation of his choice, the insinuated unhappiness and foreboding—and then the allusion to "his wife" . . . . in fancy he heard the sharp quick breath, saw the darkening of the blue eyes, the pain of the firm little mouth. . . . . But perhaps she might not read it at all; men didn't hand letters round. He must provide for that. It was written for her, she must see it. How should he manage? Ah! that was it!

"Your

"Your daughter will help you to make out my scrawl" in a prominent postscript; that was clear enough. Now to post it.

The end of the little episode, so delicate, so transient! Men were rather brutal, weren't they? Well, when girls fell in love and were so charming! It *was* a shame, though, he thought, complacently. Poor little dear! The letter slid into the box.

* * * * *

Everything was going on just the same—and he was married. But then she had always known it must end so—every one had known it. There were two sorts of knowing, though, she thought, drearily.

It all seemed quite natural; even having no letter to expect when the post came in seemed so natural, and it *had* been the roseate moment of the day. Did everything happen so? It was odd. Browning's poignant question came into her head: "Does truth sound bitter as one at first believes?" She used to imagine he had been wrong for once ("that omniscient Browning of yours"), but now that she knew. . . . .

How *was* it? She could laugh quite naturally, read and be interested in her book. Stay, though! Yesterday she had been reading a story in which the heroine had reminded her of herself, and had, of course, loved and been beloved. She had shut that book hastily and taken up a volume of essays, but soon she had reopened and devoured it with envious, aching eyes.

That was the day after the telegram had come. It had stung her a little, though it had pleased her too. So even at that moment he had thought of her; but how sure he had been! . . . . It galled her; and, besides, it seemed to proclaim it all to the curious eyes around her. They were her own people, and she loved them and they her; but their eyes were curious. She caught stolen glances, interchange

change of looks, imagined them talking of her, "Does she mind?" "Not so much as I expected"; oh, the torturing *espionage* of family life. If she could only be quite alone! She recalled the scene. From her bedroom window she had seen the telegraph boy, had thought nothing of it, telegrams were so frequent. "Effie! Effie!" First her youngest brother, wide-eyed, observant, when the room-door burst open; then her father, half-understanding, but innately unsympathetic for "love-affairs," gratified, too, at the remembrance of him, careless or unconscious of the intolerable under-meaning of the message. Something had told her what it was, what the pink scrawl contained; she had felt a burning rebellion, a hard hatred of somebody or something.

"A telegram? from whom?" Her voice was sharp and cold. "From Luttrell?" This was one of the things she loathed—that she called him "Luttrell," *tout court;* her morbid sense of humour saw the painful absurdity of it—to speak so of a man you cared for! Incredible! yet she did it. Was anything in life what you had once fancied it?

"From Luttrell?" Bravado had forced the name from her—and if it should not be from him? Even now she could recall the lash of the stinging thought.

"Yes—from Luttrell. Funny fellow! fancy his thinking of sending it! Like to see it?"

She had taken it with a laugh at the "funny fellow," had read it . . . .

"So he's really married. Well, she's a pretty girl, and a clever girl; I daresay he'll be very happy. A very clever girl."

How often, in her wayward moments, she had laughed with Luttrell over the "canonisation" of the newest *fiancée* or bride! "She had fulfilled the whole duty of woman!" she used to declare with ironic grandiosity, and he used to smile admiringly at

her spirited nonsense—and now it was he himself! But she must say something.

"Yes, she's pretty. Clever? Well, I never had the pleasure of her acquaintance." The tiny thrust had relieved her a little. "And where do they go for their honeymoon, I wonder?"

It was said: "they," "their honeymoon." Had her voice really sounded so thin and cold? She had felt just like it, "thin and cold," a meagre, desolate sort of creature. "Meagre!" how descriptive! Her lips curled into a small morbid smile. She remembered the odd sensation.

Well, that was over; the telegram-scene was two days ago now, and she was going down to lunch in that odd, dreamy sort of way, as if she was walking on air—everything was so natural, yet so unreal! . . . . "The post just in? What letters?" she said, carelessly, passing through the hall.

"One from Luttrell."

"Why, Effie, Luttrell doesn't seem absorbed in his bride," her eldest brother said, reading his own letters. "Strikes me he'd rather ——"

She could have struck him—but this must be answered in its own vein. Would it never end? "Bored on the honeymoon, I suppose; they say every one is."

"He wouldn't be, though of course he'd pretend he was——" her father laughed, opening the envelope. "Dear, dear! what a scrawl! I can't read it . . . . Effie, you read it out."

"No, indeed. I can't bear reading things aloud."

"Well, I can't. Take it, and read it to yourself, then?"

"You'd better both read it."

"Over his shoulder," one of the brothers said, mockingly.

Well, if it had to be done.

She stood and read it over her father's shoulder.

It

It was long, illegible; she spelt it out slowly to her wondering, faltering heart. This was what he had written—this?

"A nice letter, very friendly. Eh, Effie?"

"Yes, very—nice. Very—friendly."

She escaped.

In her room at last. "He wrote that? *That?*"

Her eyes met the wide dark ones in the mirror.

"Poor girl! oh, the poor, poor girl!" The mirror looked clouded, vanished quite, grew clear again.

"To think I could ever have loved him!"

For a moment she hid her shamed, white face.

"Feel up for a game of tennis, Ronald, Sydney, Edith!" her voice pealed out. One must do something to work off this mad joyous thrill of freedom, liberty . . . . looking forward!

She dashed down the stairs with a wild whirl of frills and lace-edges.

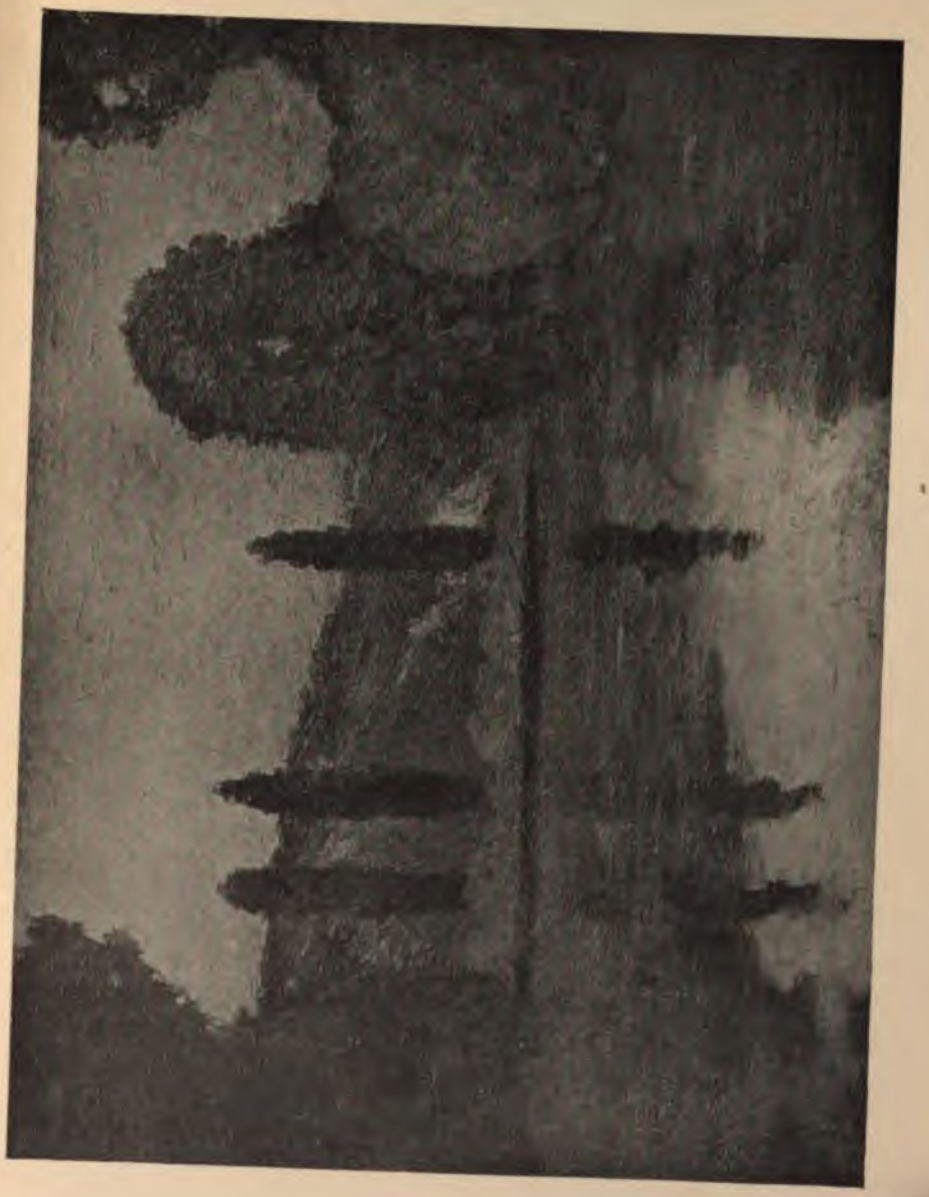
Trees

By Alfred Thornton



Trees

By Alfred Thornton



Consolation

By J. A. Blaikie

WHAT shall I grow,
When unto earth returned,
In peace I shall be laid
There, where so oft we walked in sun and shade?
Flame-flowers burning as my soul hath burned,
Whitening in passion just as flowers may
Under the fiery sun's consuming ray?
No, no! ah, no!
But so my garden-plot shall be
Sweet set with wilding bloom and grass,
Pale starry flowers there shall arise,
White for my spirit's thought, pale for mine eyes,
That wheresoe'er you thither come or pass,
Then surely shall you know, and feel, and see,
At last, though late, at last all's well with me;
In all my bitter life so sweet a thought,
So dear as this, I have not known—
To rest where singing winds, far-blown
From sea and moor, with singing birds are caught
Amid the fostering grey of apple-trees,

[illegible]

[illegible]

A Beautiful Accident

By Stanley V. Makower

WHAT an exquisite feeling there is about this spring afternoon. A tender grace clings to every object in the scene. On one side of the road a row of shops: milliners, grocers, florists, a little second-hand book-shop wedged in between a pastry-cook and a chemist, and so on. On the other side a block of tall, soft brown houses standing a little way back from the road, with small, narrow gardens in front of them. It is about three o'clock in the afternoon. All the people in the neighbourhood have come out—more to enjoy the air than to attend to the business on which they pretend to be bent. But the shops are well filled, and there is a ceaseless clapping of heels outside on the pavement. Ladies in twos and threes wander slowly along, talking, and stopping now and then to gaze in at a shop window, and all the time the sun shines lazily from a mild blue sky streaked here and there with thin white clouds. Blue shadows are on the pavement and in little pools of water left from the rain of yesterday; carriages and cabs in the road, and people crossing in and out of them. From time to time some one goes into one of the houses on the other side of the road.

First, it is a straggling schoolboy, with a load of books and a lazy, reluctant air, as if he would rather stay outside. Then a tall,

tall, elegant lady, with a light feather boa that quivers all over with the soft breeze. Now an old and infirm man stands on his doorstep listening to the pleasing bustle of the scene and sniffing in the spring air. He, too, enjoys it, for it puts fresh life into him, and awakens many dim reminiscences of spring. He does not think of things that have happened: he is only conscious of having felt like this before, and in a way very intimately associated with his life. You can see it in his face as he looks in a kind of meditative, satisfied way at the people who pass before him on the pavement.

The whole scene is perfect. You could not pick a fault in it anywhere. Just now a child wanders across the road, following a little hoop which quivers and rolls in front of it. The anxious nurse runs after it to take its hand for fear of a passing carriage. Perfect. It must have happened. If it had not you would have missed something. A sense of uneasiness would have come to you from the scene. But it does happen. The nurse and child reach the other side of the road; and now you see that the line they took in crossing was also necessary to the whole picture. You cannot tell why, but you feel that it is part of a scheme. Examine everything round you: a satisfying proportion suggests itself to you, an appropriateness in the relationship of one thing to another, and this not through the cunning of an architect: for the buildings are in mixed styles, some very different from those standing next to them, but the colours, softened by age, mingle into a harmony made all the more subtle by the light haze that is over everything.

How strange the houses opposite look as soon as the pictorial view of them fades from the mind. It is so impossible to believe that they contain all the attributes of the interior of a house and that people actually live in them. They are so high, and then those

those rows upon rows of windows—not mere pieces of glass fixed in a flat wall such as would suggest that they were to let in the light of the sun for human use—but elaborate contrivances of some fanciful builder, with cornices and ornamental frames. No, it is impossible to think of them as having anything to do with a place where people dwell, and yet there is a consistent beauty about the whole scene of which they are a part.

Look at a small window at the corner of a block right at the top. This has a beauty of its own. You can look at it by day or by night, in summer or winter, it is always beautiful. Only a narrow border of wall separates it from the air above and on one side. Look at it now.

The lower sash has been raised a little. In the middle, hanging a little below the level to which the sash has been raised, is a tassel on a fine cord belonging to a yellow blind now rolled up. This tassel is gently swinging about in the breeze while the people are walking to and fro below in the sunlit street. See how it bobs backwards and forwards with a kind of silent laziness.

Now it is swinging sideways. It almost touches the white muslin curtains that hang on each side. They are not quite still either. Occasionally they flutter as a breath of wind catches them. Standing on the sill outside is a tiny little pot with a fuzzy green plant in it. The leaves are so small that you can only just see that the wind is playing with them too, very gently.

No one comes to the window; very likely there is no one in the room; at all events, this tassel has nothing to do with the inmates. It is part of the outside of the house: one gem in the great beauty of the street outside. Besides, the inmates cannot have intended things to be so. Are not windows made to see out of! Who would put pretty white curtains in front to flutter in the

the wind and a tassel to swing about so gracefully? No, they have got there somehow, because the street wanted it—that is all.

* * * * *

The sun has thrown a red glow on to the window pane. The tassel is almost still. It is evening now, and all the pretty ladies have gone home. Their afternoon lounge is over. The shops are putting up great shutters, and all the street is growing black and dark.

Look at the little window. The yellow blind is down and a light behind gives to it a soft, warm colour. In the centre is a black shadow which we can recognise to be the shape of the back of a small looking-glass. But we do not think of the looking-glass. We only see a bright yellow ground with a queerly shaped black shadow in the centre, and on each side of it a dark wing formed by the shape of the muslin curtains. The little fuzzy plant is gone. The rest of the street has lost the aspect that it wore this afternoon, but the little window is still beautiful.

* * * * *

And now it is a hot summer night and the stars are out, and lovers are walking in couples along the dusty street, and there is stillness in the air. It has been so hot all day. The sun blazed down upon the white pavement and the people crawled lazily along the streets. The window was wide open all day, but the tassel hung straight down like a rod and never moved, and the little fuzzy plant became quite brown and shrivelled as the burning rays beat down upon it.

Now it is dark, and still there is something beautiful in the window—a white patch up in the corner of the pane—the reflection of a large brilliant star. And underneath, the lazy shuffling of the

the lovers' feet along the pavement. Surely no living person could have lifted the sash so skilfully that the glass could catch the image of that star?

* * * * *

The heat has passed away. A mild damp wind is sweeping over the street, whirling along the dry leaves from the trees in the little gardens in front of the houses; they rush and crackle as they fly along the pavement. People hurry along, struggling with the wind. They do not loiter at the shop windows. The little window is closed. Occasionally the tassel moves in a spasmodic way, and the white curtains shudder when the wind rushes in through some crevice. So far there is nothing beautiful; but in a moment the light shifts. Look, now there is a thin metallic blue reflection in the pane; and now great masses of white float swiftly across it. Watch them, one after another. How quickly they pass! Who put that window in such a position that it might catch the beauty of these fleeting clouds? Is it to make up for the little fuzzy plant? For that is gone for ever.

* * * * *

A thin yellow fog is over the street, and under foot there is a thick mud from the recent snow; the air is very cold, and a drizzling rain is trickling through the fog upon the few people who are in the street. There is a cold silence about it to-day. Occasionally you may hear the sticky noise made by a cart or carriage making its way through the muddy floor of the street. It is not dark enough to light the gas inside the houses, and so the street looks dead and deserted.

As you look up at the little window, a yellow glimmer springs up behind the water-bespattered pane. The thin yellow fog round the window is scattered into single points of black and pale





Four Prose Fancies

By Richard Le Gallienne

I.—On Loving One's Enemies

LIKE all people who live apart from it, the Founder of the Christian religion was possessed of a profound knowledge of the world. As, according to the proverb, the woodlander sees nothing of the wood, because of its trees, so those who live in the world know nothing of it. They know its gaudy, glittering surface, its Crystal Palace fireworks, and the paste-diamonds with which it bedecks itself; they know its music halls and its night clubs, its Piccadillies and its politics, its restaurants and its salons; but of the bad—or good?—heart of it all, they know nothing. In more meanings than one, it takes a saint to catch a sinner; and Christ certainly knew as well as saved the sinner.

But none of His precepts show a truer knowledge of life and its conditions than His commandment that we should love our enemies. He realised—can we doubt?—that without enemies the Church He bade His followers build could not hope to be established. He knew that the spiritual fire He strove to kindle would spread but a little unless the four winds of the world blew against it. Well, indeed, may the Christian Church love its enemies, for it is they who have made it.

Indeed,

Indeed, for a man, or a cause, that wants to get on there is nothing like a few hearty, zealous enemies. Most of us would never be heard of if it were not for our enemies. The unsuccessful man counts up his friends, but the successful man numbers his enemies. A friend of mine was lamenting, the other day, that he could not find twelve people to disbelieve in him. He had been seeking them for years, he sighed, and could not get beyond eleven. But, even so, with only eleven he was a very successful man. In these kind-hearted days enemies are becoming so rare that one has to go out of one's way to make them. The true interpretation, therefore, of the easiest of the commandments is—make your enemies, and your enemies will make you.

So soon as the armed men begin to spring up in our fields, we may be sure we have not sown in vain.

Properly understood, an enemy is but a negative embodiment of our personalities or ideas. He is the involuntary witness to our vitality. Much as he despises us, greatly as he may injure us, he is none the less a creature of our making. It was we who put into him the breath of his malignity, and inspired the activity of his malice. Therefore, with his very existence so tremendous a tribute, we can afford to smile at his self-conscious disclaimers of our significance. Though he slay us, we *made* him—to "make an enemy," is not that the phrase ?

Indeed, the fact that he is our enemy is his one *raison d'être*. That alone should make us charitable to him. Live and let live. Without us our enemy has no occupation, for to hate us is his profession. Think of his wives and families !

The friendship of the little for the great is an old-established profession ; there is but one older—namely, the hatred of the little for the great ; and, though it is perhaps less officially recognised, it is without doubt the more lucrative. It is one of the shortest roads

to

to fame. Why is the name of Pontius Pilate an uneasy ghost of history? Think what fame it would have meant to be an enemy of Socrates or Shakespeare! *Blackwood's Magazine* and *The Quarterly Review* only survive to-day because they once did their best to strangle the genius of Keats and Tennyson. Two or three journals of our own time, by the same unfailing method, seek that circulation from posterity which is denied them in the present.

This is particularly true in literature, where the literary enemy is as organised a tradesman as the literary agent. Like the literary agent, he naturally does his best to secure the biggest men. No doubt the time will come when the literary cut-throat—shall we call him?—will publish dainty little books of testimonials from authors, full of effusive gratitude for the manner in which they have been slashed and bludgeoned into fame. "Butcher to Mr. Grant Allen" may then become a familiar legend over literary shop-fronts:

> Ah! did you stab at Shelley's heart
> With silly sneer and cruel lie?
> And Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Keats,
> To murder did you nobly try?
>
> You failed, 'tis true; but what of that?
> The world remembers still your name—
> 'Tis fame, *for you*, to be the cur
> That barks behind the heels of Fame.

Any one who is fortunate enough to have enemies will know that all this is far from being fanciful. If one's enemies have any other *raison d'être* beyond the fact of their being our enemies—what is it? They are neither beautiful nor clever, wise nor good, famous,

II.—The Dramatic Art of Life

It is a curious truth that, whereas in every other art deliberate choice of method and careful calculation of effect are expected from the artist, in the greatest and most difficult art of all, the art of life, this is not so. In literature, painting, or sculpture you first evolve your conception, and then after long study of it, as it still glows and shimmers in your imagination, you set about the reverent selection of that form which shall be its most truthful incarnation, in words, in paint, in marble. Now life, as has been said many times, is an art too. Sententious morality from time past has told us that we are each given a part to play, evidently implying, with involuntary cynicism, that the art of life is—the art of acting!

As with the actor we are each given a certain dramatic conception for the expression of which we have precisely the same artistic materials—namely, our own bodies, sometimes including heart and brains. One has often heard the complaint of a certain actor that he acts himself. On the metaphorical stage of life the complaint and the implied demand are just the reverse. How much more interesting life would be if only more people had the courage and skill to act themselves, instead of abjectly understudying some one else. Of course, there are supers on the stage of life as on the real stage. It is proper that these should dress and speak and think alike. These one courteously excepts from the generalisation that the composer of the play, as Marcus Aurelius calls him, has given us a certain part to play—that part simply oneself: a part, need one say, by no means as easy as it seems; a part most difficult to study, and requiring daily rehearsal. So difficult is it, indeed, that most

most people throw up the part, and join the ranks of the supers —who, curiously enough, are paid much more handsomely than the principals. They enter one of the learned or idle professions, join the army or take to trade, and so speedily rid themselves of the irksome necessity of being anything more individual than "the learned counsel," "the learned judge," "my lord bishop," or "the colonel," names impersonal in application as the dignity of "Pharaoh," whereof the name and not the man was alone important. Henceforth they are the Church, the Law, the Army, the City, or that vaguer profession, Society. Entering one of these, they become as lost to the really living world as the monk who voluntarily surrenders all will and character of his own at the threshold of his monastery: bricks in a prison wall, privates in the line, peas in a row. But, as I say, these are the parts that pay. For playing the others, indeed, you are not paid, but expected to pay—dearly.

It is full time we turned to those on whom falls the burden of those real parts. Such, when quite young, if they be conscientious artists, will carefully consider themselves, their gifts and possibilities, study to discover their artistic *raison d'être* and how best to fulfil it. He or she will say: Here am I, a creature of great gifts and exquisite sensibilities, drawn by great dreams, and vibrating to great emotions; yet this potent and exquisite self is as yet, I know, but unwrought material of the perfect work of art it is intended that I should make of it—but the marble whereupon with patient chisel I must liberate the perfect and triumphant ME! As a poet listening with trembling ear to the voice of his inspiration, so I tremulously ask myself—what is the divine conception that is to become embodied in me, what is the divine meaning of ME? How best shall I express it in look, in word, in deed, till my outer self becomes the truthful symbol of my inner self

self—till, in fact, I have successfully placed the best of myself on the outside !—for others besides myself to see, and know and love !

What is my part, and how am I to play it ?

Returning to the latter image, there are two difficulties that beset one in playing a part on the stage of life, right at the outset. You are not allowed to "look" it, or "dress" it ! What would an actor think, who, asked to play Hamlet, found that he would be expected to play it without make-up and in nineteenth-century costume ? Yet many of us are in a like dilemma with similar parts. Actors and audience must all wear the same drab clothes and the same immobile expression. It is in vain you protest that you do not really belong to this absurd and vulgar nineteenth century, that you have been spirited into it by a cruel mistake, that you really belong to mediæval Florence, to Elizabethan, Caroline, or at latest Queen Anne England, and that you would like to be allowed to look and dress as like it as possible. It is no use ; if you dare to look or dress like anything but your own tradesmen—and other critics—it is at your peril. If you are beautiful, you are expected to disguise a fact that is an open insult to every other person you look at ; and you must, as a general rule, never look, wear, feel, or say what everybody else is not also looking, wearing, feeling, or saying.

Thus you get some hint of the difficulty of playing the part of yourself on this stage of life. In these matters of dressing and looking your part musicians seem granted an immunity denied to all their fellow-artists. Perhaps it is taken for granted that the musician is a fool—the British public is so intuitive. Yet it takes the same view of the poet—without allowing him a like immunity. And, by the way, what a fine conception of his part had Tennyson : of the dignity, the mystery, the picturesqueness of it. Tennyson would have felt it an artistic crime to look like his

his publisher; yet what poet is there left us to-day half so distinguished-looking as his publisher?

Indeed, curiously enough, among no set of men does the desire to look as commonplace as the rest of the world seem so strong as among men of letters. Perhaps it is out of consideration for the rest of the world; but whatever the reason, immobility of expression and general mediocrity of style are more characteristic of them at present than even the military.

It is surely a strange paradox that we should pride ourselves on schooling to foolish insensibility, on eliminating from them every mark of individual character, the faces that were intended subtly and eloquently to image our moods—to look glad when we are glad, sorry when we are sorry, angry in anger, and lovely in love.

The impassivity of the modern young man is indeed a weird and wonderful thing. Is it a mark to hide from us the appalling sins he none the less openly affects? Is it meant to conceal that once in his life he paid a wild visit to "The Empire"—by kind indulgence of the County Council? that he once chucked a barmaid under the chin, that he once nearly got drunk, that he once spoke to a young lady he did not know—and then ran away?

One sighs for the young men of the days of Gautier and Hugo, the young men with red waistcoats who made asses of themselves at first nights and on the barricades, young men with romance in their hearts and passion in their blood, fearlessly sentimental and picturesquely everything.

The lover then was not ashamed that you should catch radiant glimpses of his love in his eyes—nay! if you smiled kindly on him, he would take you by the arm and insist on your breaking a bottle with him in honour of his mistress. Joy and sorrow then wore their appropriate colours, according, so to say, to the natural sumptuary

sumptuary laws of the emotions—one of which is that the right place for the heart is the sleeve.

It is the duty of those who are great, or to whom great destinies of joy or sorrow have been dealt, to wear their distinctions for the world to see. It is good for the world, which in its crude way indicates the rudiments of this dramatic art of life, when it decrees that the bride shall walk radiant in orange blossom, and the mourner sadden our streets with blacks—symbols ever passing before us of the moving vicissitudes of life.

The mourner cannot always be sad, or the bride merry; the bride indeed sometimes weeps at the altar, and the mourner laughs a savage cynical laugh at the grave; but for those moments in which they awhile forget parts more important than themselves, the tailor and the dressmaker have provided symbolical garments, just as military decorations have been provided for heroes without the gift of looking heroic, and sacerdotal vestments for the priest, who, like a policeman, is not always on duty.

In playing his part the conscientious artist in life, like any other actor, must often seem to feel more than he really feels at a given moment, say more than he means. In this he is far from being insincere—though he must make up his mind to be accused daily of insincerity and affectation. On the contrary, it will be his very sincerity that necessitates his make-believe. With his great part ever before him in its inspiring completeness, he must be careful to allow no merely personal accident of momentary feeling or action to jeopardise the general effect. There are moments, for example, when a really true lover, owing to such masterful natural facts as indigestion, a cold, or extreme sleepiness, is unable to feel all that he knows he really feels. To "tell the truth," as it is called under such circumstances, would simply be a most dangerous form of lying. There is no duty we owe to truth

truth more imperative than that of lying stoutly on occasion—for, indeed, there is often no other way of conveying the whole truth than by telling the part-lie.

A watchful sincerity to our great conception of ourselves is the first and last condition of our creating that finest work of art—a personality; for a personality, like a poet, is not only born, but made.

III.—The Arbitrary Classification of Sex

In an essay on Vauvenargues Mr. John Morley speaks with characteristic causticity of those epigrammatists "who persist in thinking of man and woman as two different species," and who make verbal capital out of the fancied distinction in the form of smart epigrams beginning "*Les femmes.*" It is one of Shakespeare's cardinal characteristics that *he understood woman.* Mr. Meredith's fame as a novelist is largely due to the fact that he too *understands women.* The one spot on the sun of Robert Louis Stevenson's fame, so we are told, is that he could *never draw a woman.* His capacity for drawing men counted for nothing, apparently, beside this failure. Evidently the Sphinx has not the face of a woman for nothing. That is why no one has yet read her riddle, translated her mystic smile. Yet many people smile mysteriously, without any profound meanings behind their smile, with no other reason than a desire to mystify. Perhaps the Sphinx smiles to herself just for the fun of seeing us take her smile so seriously. And surely women must so smile as they hear their psychology so gravely discussed. Of course, the superstition is invaluable to them, and it is only natural that they should make the most of it. Man is supposed to be a complete ignoramus in regard

regard to all the specialised female "departments"—from the supreme mystery of the female heart to the humble domestic mysteries of a household. Similarly, men are supposed to have no taste in women's dress, yet for whom do women clothe themselves in the rainbow and the sea-foam, if not to please men? And was not the high-priest of that delicious and fascinating mystery a man—if it be proper to call the late M. Worth a man?—as the best cooks are men, and the best waiters?

It would seem to be assumed from all this mystification that men are beings clear as daylight, both to themselves and to women. Poor simple manageable souls, their wants are easily satisfied, their psychology—which, it is implied, differs little from their physiology—long since mapped out.

It may be so, but it is the opinion of some that men's simplicity is no less a fiction than women's mysterious complexity, and that human character is made up of much the same qualities in men and women, irrespective of a merely rudimentary sexual distinction, which has, of course, its proper importance, and which the present writer would be the last to wish away. From that quaint distinction of sex springs, of course, all that makes life in the smallest degree worth living, from great religions to tiny flowers. Love and beauty and poetry; "Romeo and Juliet," "Helen of Troy," Shakespeare's plays, Burne-Jones's pictures, and Wagner's operas—all such moving expressions of human life, as a great scientist has shown us, spring from the all-important fact that "male and female created He them."

This everybody knows, and few are fool enough to deny. Many people, however, confuse this organic distinction of sex with its time-worn conventional symbols; just as religion is commonly confused with its external rites and ceremonies. The comparison naturally continues itself further; for, as in religion so soon

soon as some traditional garment of the faith has become outworn or otherwise unsuitable, and the proposal is made to dispense with or substitute it, an outcry immediately is raised that religion itself is in danger—so with sex, no sooner does one or the other sex propose to discard its arbitrary conventional characteristics, or to supplement them by others borrowed from its fellow-sex, than an outcry immediately is raised that sex itself is in danger.

Sex—the most potent force in the universe—in danger because women wear knickerbockers instead of petticoats, or military men take to corsets and cosmetics!

That parallel with religion may be pursued profitably one step further. In religion, the test of your faith is not how you live, not in your kindness of heart or purity of mind, but how you believe—in the Trinity, in the Atonement; and do you turn to the East during the recital of the Apostles' Creed? These and such, as every one knows, are the vital matters of religion. And it is even so with sex. You are not asked for the realities of manliness or womanliness; but for the shadows, the arbitrary externalities, the fashion of which changes from generation to generation.

To be truly womanly you must never wear your hair short; to be truly manly you must never wear it long. To be truly womanly you must dress as daintily as possible, however uncomfortably; to be truly manly you must wear the most hideous gear ever invented by the servility of tailors—a strange succession of cylinders from head to heel; cylinder on head, cylinder round your body, cylinders on arms and cylinders on legs. To be truly womanly you must be shrinking and clinging in manner and trivial in conversation, you must have no ideas and rejoice that you wish for none; you must thank Heaven that you have never ridden a bicycle or smoked a cigarette; and you must be prepared

prepared to do a thousand other absurd and ridiculous things. To be truly manly you must be and do the opposite of all these things, with this exception—that with you the possession of ideas is optional. The finest specimens of British manhood are without them, but that, I say, is, generally speaking, a matter for yourself. It is indeed the only matter in which you have any choice. More important matters, such as the cut of your clothes and hair, the shape of your face, the length of your moustache and the pattern of your cane—all these are very properly regulated for you by laws of fashion, which you could never dream of breaking. You may break every moral law there is—or rather, was—and still remain a man. You may be a bully, a cad, a coward and a fool in the poor heart and brains of you ; but so long as you wear the mock regimentals of contemporary manhood, and are above all things plain and undistinguished enough, your reputation for manhood will be secure. There is nothing so dangerous to a reputation for manhood as brains or beauty.

In short, to be a true woman you have only to be pretty and an idiot, and to be a true man you have only to be brutal and a fool.

From these misconceptions of manliness and womanliness, these superstitions of sex, many curious confusions have come about. The, so to say, professional differentiation between the sexes had at one time gone so far that men were credited with the entire monopoly of a certain set of human qualities, and women with the monopoly of a certain set of other human qualities ; yet every one of these are qualities which one would have thought were proper to, and necessary for, all human beings alike, male and female.

In a dictionary of a date (1856) when everything on earth and in heaven was settled and written in penny cyclopedias and books of deportment, I find these delicious definitions :

Manly :

Manly : becoming a man ; firm ; brave ; undaunted ; dignified ; noble ; stately ; not boyish or womanish.

Womanly : becoming a woman ; feminine ; as *womanly* behaviour.

Under *Woman* we find the adjectives—soft, mild, pitiful and flexible, kind, civil, obliging, humane, tender, timorous, modest.

Who can doubt that the dictionary maker defined and distributed his adjectives aright for the year 1856? Since then, however, many alarming heresies have taken root steadily in our land, and some are heard to declare that both these sets of adjectives apply to men and women alike, and are, in fact, necessities of any decent human outfit. Otherwise the conclusion is obvious, that no one desirous of the adjective "manly" must ever be—soft, mild, pitiful and flexible, kind, civil, obliging, humane, tender, timorous, or modest ; and no one desirous of the adjective "womanly"—be firm, brave, undaunted, dignified, noble, or stately.

But surely the essentials of "manliness" and "womanliness" belong to man and woman alike—the externals are purely artistic considerations, and subject to the vagaries of fashion. In art no one would think of allowing fashion any serious artistic opinion. It is usually the art which is out of fashion that is most truly art. Similarly, fashions in manliness or womanliness have nothing to do with real manliness or womanliness. Moreover, the adjectives "manly" or "womanly," applied to works of art, or the artistic surfaces of men and women, are irrelevant—that is to say, impertinent. You have no right to ask a poem or a picture to look manly or womanly, any more than you have any right to ask a man or a woman to look manly or womanly. There is no such thing as looking manly or womanly. There is looking beautiful or ugly, distinguished or commonplace. The one law of externals is beauty in all its various manifestations. To ask the sex of a beautiful person is as absurd as it would be to ask the publisher

publisher the sex of a beautiful book. Such questions are for midwives and doctors.

It was once the fashion for heroes to shed tears on the smallest occasion, and it does not appear that they fought the worse for it: some of the firmest, bravest, most undaunted, some dignified, most noble, most stately human beings have been women; as some of the softest, mildest, most pitiful and flexible, most kind, civil, obliging, humane, tender, timorous and modest human beings have been men. Indeed, the bravest men that ever trod this planet have worn corsets, and it needs more courage nowadays for a man to wear his hair long than to machine-gun a whole African nation. Moreover, quite the nicest women one knows ride bicycles—in the rational costume.

IV.—The Fallacy of a Nation

It is, I am given to understand, a familiar axiom of mathematics that no number of ciphers placed in front of significant units, or tens or hundreds of units, adds in the smallest degree to the numerical value of those units. The figure one becomes of no more importance however many noughts are marshalled in front of it—though, indeed, in the mathematics of human nature this is not so. Is not a man or woman considered great in proportion to the number of ciphers that walk in front of him, from a humble brace of domestics to guards of honour and imperial armies?

A parallel profound truth of mathematics is that a nought, however many times it be multiplied, remains nought; but again we find the reverse obtain in the mathematics of human nature. One might have supposed that the result of one nobody multiplied

even fifty million times would still be nobody. However, such is far from being the case. Fifty million nobodies make—a nation. Of course, there is no need for so many. I am reckoning as a British subject, and speak of fifty million merely as an illustration of the general fact that it is the multiplication of nobodies that makes a nation. "Increase and multiply" was, it will be remembered, the recipe for the Jewish nation.

Nobodies of the same colour, tongues, and prejudices, have but to congregate together in a crowd sufficiently big for other similar crowds to recognise them, and they are given a name of their own, and become recognised as a nation—one of "the Great Powers."

Beyond those differences in colour, tongue, and prejudices, there is really no difference between the component units—or rather ciphers—of all these several national crowds. You have seen a procession of various trades-unions filing towards Hyde Park, each section with its particular banner of a strange device: "the United Guild of Paperhangers," "the Ancient Order of Plumbers," and so on. And you may have marvelled to notice how alike the members of the various carefully differentiated companies were. So to say, they each and all might have been plumbers; and you couldn't help feeling that it wouldn't have mattered much if some of the paperhangers had by mistake got walking amongst the plumbers, or *vice versa*.

So the great trades-unions of the world file past, one with the odd word "Russia" on its banner; another boasting itself "Germany"—this with a particularly bumptious and self-important young man walking backward in front of it, in the manner of a Salvation Army captain, and imperially waving an iron wand; still another "nation" calling itself "France"; and yet another boasting the biggest brass band, and called "England." Other smaller bodies of nobodies—that is, smaller nations—file past with humbler

humbler tread—though there is really no need for their doing so. For, as we have said, they are in every particular like to those haughtier nations who take precedence of them. In fact, one or two of them such as Norway and Denmark—were a truer system of human mathematics to obtain—are really of more importance than the so-called greater nations, in that among their nobodies they include a larger percentage of intellectual somebodies.

Remembering that percentage of wise men, the formula of a nation were perhaps more truly stated in our first mathematical image. The wise men in a nation are as the units with the noughts in front of them. And when I say wise men I do not, indeed, mean merely the literary men or the artists, but all those somebodies with some real force of character, people with brains and hearts, fighters and lovers, saints and thinkers, and the patient industrious workers. Such, if you consider, are really no integral part of the nation among which they are cast. They have no part in what are grandiloquently called national interests—war, politics, and horse-racing to wit. A change of Government leaves them as unmoved as an election for the Board of Guardians. They would as soon think of entering Parliament or the County Council, as of yearning to manage the gasworks, or to go about with one of those carts bearing the legend "Aldermen and Burgesses of the City of London" conspicuously upon its front. Their main concern in political change is the rise and fall of the income-tax, and, be the Cabinet Tory or Liberal, their rate papers come in for the same amount. It is likely that national changes would affect them but little more. What would a foreign invasion mean more than that we should pay our taxes to French, Russian, or German officials, instead of to English ones? French and Italians do our cooking, Germans manage our music, Jews control our money markets; surely it would make little difference to us for France,

France, Russia, or Germany to undertake our government. Japan, indeed, already dictates our foreign policy. The worst of being conquered by Russia would be the necessity of learning Russian; whereas a little rubbing up of our French would make us comfortable with France. Besides, to be conquered by France would save us crossing the Channel to Paris, and then we might hope for cafés in Regent Street, and an emancipated literature. As a matter of fact, so-called national interests are merely certain private interests on a large scale, the private interests of financiers, ambitious politicians and soldiers, and great merchants. Broadly speaking, there are no rival nations—there are rival markets, and it is its Board of Trade and its Stock Exchange rather than its Houses of Parliament that virtually govern a country. Thus one seaport goes down and another comes up, industries forsake one country to bless another, the military and naval strengths of nations fluctuate this way and that; and to those whom these changes affect they are undoubtedly important matters—the great capitalist, the soldier, and the politician; but to the quiet man at home with his wife, his children, his books and his flowers, to the artist busied with braver translunary matters, to the saint with his eyes filled with "the white radiance of eternity," to the shepherd on the hillside, the milkmaid in love, or the angler at his sport—what are these pompous commotions, these busy, bustling mimicries of reality? England will be just as good to live in though men some day call her France. Let the big busybodies divide her amongst them as they like, so that they leave one alone with one's fair share of the sky and the grass, and an occasional not too vociferous nightingale.

The reader will perhaps forgive the hackneyed reference to Sir Thomas Browne peacefully writing his *Religio Medici* amid all the commotions of the Civil War, and to Gautier calmly correcting

recting the proofs of his new poems during the siege of Paris. The milkman goes his rounds amid the crash of empires. It is not his business to fight. His business is to distribute his milk—as much after half-past seven as may be inconvenient. Similarly, the business of the thinker is with his thought, the poet with his poetry. It is the business of politicians to make national quarrels, and the business of the soldier to fight them. But as for the poet—let him correct his proofs, or beware the printer.

The idea, then, of a nation is a grandiloquent fallacy in the interests of commerce and ambition—political and military. All the great and good, clever and charming people belong to one secret nation, for which there is no name unless it be the Chosen People. They are the lost tribes of love, art and religion, lost and swamped amid alien peoples, but ever dreaming of a time when they shall meet once more in Jerusalem.

Yet though they are thus aliens, taking and wishing no part in the organisation of the "nations" among which they dwell, this does not prevent those nations taking part and credit in them. And whenever a brave soldier wins a battle, or an intrepid traveller discovers a new land, his particular nation flatters itself as though it—the million nobodies—had done it. With a profound indifference to, indeed an active dislike of, art and poetry, there is nothing on which a nation prides itself so much as upon its artists and poets, whom, invariably, they starve, neglect, and even insult as long as it is not too silly to do so.

Thus the average Englishman talks of Shakespeare—as though he himself had written the plays; of India as though he himself had conquered it. And thus grow up such fictions as "national greatness" and "public opinion."

For what is "national greatness" but the glory reflected from the memories of a few great individuals? and what is "public opinion"

opinion" but the blustering echoes of the opinion of a few clever young men on the morning papers?

For how can people in themselves little become great by merely congregating into a crowd, however large? And surely fools do not become wise, or worth listening to, merely by the fact of their banding together.

A "public opinion" on any matter except football, prize-fighting, and perhaps cricket, is merely ridiculous—by whatever brutal physical powers it may be enforced—ridiculous as a town council's opinion upon art; and a nation is merely a big fool with an army.



Two Pictures

By William Strang

I. Going to Church

II. Sketch





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Two Letters to a Friend

By Theodore Watts

O LOVE, my love! if I no more should see
Thyself, nor on the earth the shadow of thee,
Nor image of thine eyes in any spring,—
How then should sound upon Life's darkening slope
The ground-whirl of the perished leaves of Hope,
The wind of Death's imperishable wing?

D. G. R.

Letter I.—After the Wedding

BRIGHT-BROWED as Summer's self who claspt the land—
With eyes like English skies, where seemed to play
Deep azure dreams behind the tender grey—
All light and love, she moved: I see her stand
Beneath that tree; I see the happy band
Of bridesmaids on the lawn where blossoms sway
In light so rare it seems as if the day
Glowed conscious of the future's golden strand.

O Friend, if sun and wind and flowers and birds
In language deeper drawn than human words

From

From deeper founts than Time shall e'er destroy,
All spoke to thee in Summer's rich caress,
Even so my heart, though wordless too, could bless:
It could but feel a joy to know thy joy.

Letter II.—After Death's Mockery

When Death from out the dark, by one blind blow,
Strikes down Love's heart of hearts—severs a life—
Cleaves it in twain as by a sudden knife,
Leaving the dreadful Present, dumb with woe,
Mocked by a Past whose rainbow-skies aglow
O'erarch Love's bowers where all his flowers seem rife
In bloom of one sweet loving girl and wife—
Then Friendship's voice must whisper, whisper low.

Though well I know 'tis thou who dost inherit
Heroic blood and faith that lends the spirit
Strength known to souls like thine of noblest strain,
Comfort I dare not proffer. What relief
Shall Friendship proffer Love in such wild grief?
I can but suffer pain to know thy pain:

I can but suffer pain; and yet to me
Returns that day whose light seemed heavenly light,
Whose breath seemed incense rising to unite
That lawn—where every flower, and bird and bee

Seemed

Seemed loving her who shone beneath that tree—
  With lawns far off whose flower of higher delight
  Behind Death's icy peaks and fens of night
Bloomed 'neath a heaven her eyes, not ours, could see.

Brother, did Nature mock us with that glory
Which seemed to prophesy Love's rounded story?
  Or was it, that sweet Summer's fond device
To show thee *who* shall stand on Eden slopes,
Where bloom the broken buds of earthly hopes—
  Stand waiting 'neath a tree of Paradise?







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